

AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE

ME, 1918

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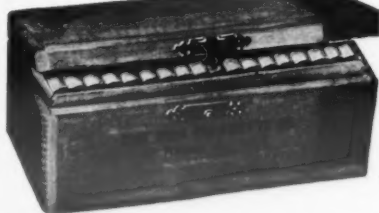
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The Magazine That Entertains

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Gen. Gibson Says He Feels That Every Soldier Who goes to the Front Should Take Nuxated Iron

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York and the Westchester County Hospital, says every soldier and civilian who wants something to help increase his strength and endurance should have the prescription below filled and take Nuxated Iron three times daily as did Generals Gibson, Gordon and Clem and Judge Yoder.

What every soldier most needs is tremendous "stay there" strength, power and endurance, with nerves of steel and blood of iron. To help produce this result there is nothing in my experience which I have found so valuable as organic iron—Nuxated Iron, says Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital. "I have personally found it of such great value as a tonic, strength and blood builder that I believe if General Gibson's advice were followed many of our fighting men would find it of great benefit. In my opinion there is nothing better than organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for enriching the blood and helping increase strength, energy and endurance."

General Horatio Gates Gibson says Nuxated Iron has brought back to him in good measure that old buoyancy and energy that filled his veins in 1847 when he made his triumphant entry with General Scott into the City of Mexico, and he feels that every soldier who goes to the front should take Nuxated Iron.

General David Stuart Gordon, U. S. A. (Retired), promoted for gallant conduct in the battle of Gettysburg, well-known Indian fighter. General Gordon says: "Despite my own advanced age, Nuxated Iron has made me fit and ready for another campaign, and if my country needs me, I stand ready to go."

Another remarkable case is that of General David Stuart Gordon, noted Indian fighter and hero of the battle of Gettysburg. General Gordon says: "When I became badly run down this year, I found myself totally without the physical power to come back as I had done in my younger days. I tried different so-called 'tonics,' without feeling any better, but finally I heard of how physicians were widely recommending organic iron to renew red blood and rebuild strength in worn-out bodies. As a result I started taking Nuxated Iron and within a month it had roused my weakened vital forces and made me feel strong again, giving me endurance such as I never hoped to again possess."

Another interesting case is that of General John Lincoln Clem, who at the early age of 12 years was Sergeant in the U. S. Army and the last veteran of the Civil War to remain on the U. S. Army active list.

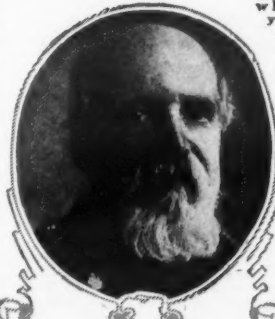
General John L. Clem, U. S. A. (Retired), the drummer boy of Shiloh who entered the U. S. Army as a drummer boy at the age of eleven years. He was promoted to be Sergeant for gallantry at the battle of Chancellorsville when only 12 years old. He says that Nuxated Iron is the one and ever-reliable tonic that he obtained most surprising results from its use in two years time.

General Clem says: "I died in Nuxated Iron the one and ever-reliable tonic. Two months after beginning the treatment I am a well man."

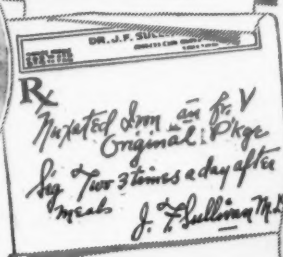
If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down instead of doing themselves with habit-forming drug stimulants and alcoholic beverages there are probably thousands who might readily build up their red blood corpuscles, increase their physical energy, and get themselves into a condition to ward off the millions of disease germs that are almost continually around us. It is surprising how many people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to take the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Then take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.

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General Horatio Gates Gibson, U. S. A. (Retired), who entered the City of Mexico in the war of 1847 with General Winfield Scott.



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AINSLIEE'S

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JUNE, 1918.

No. 5.



The God in the Machine

By Elinor Chipp

CHAPTER I.

SO now, my dear, I am going to marry Billy Van Vliet."

Thus ended the letter. Cyril Royden read the sentence over at least a dozen times. Then he held up the envelope in which it had come and gazed unflinchingly at it for five minutes. He examined his name written in a fine, firm hand; he looked attentively at the blurred postmark; he even scrutinized the back of the envelope; but nothing, not even the torn flap, gave him any clew to the mental attitude of the writer.

So she was going to marry again, and Billy Van Vliet of all men! She had asked casually if Cyril remembered him. Oh, yes, he remembered Van Vliet all right, simpering ass that he was! Always hanging about in the club windows watching for pretty women to pass, and when he found one, following her with his eyes all down the street and rubbing his hands together with a "hideous, furtive relish!" Bah!

It was easy enough to see why he

wanted Lynette, but what in the world had induced her to accept him? Was it simply his money? Lynette was certainly fond of money, or rather of the things that money could buy. It was really that which had caused her to divorce Cyril. His slender means had not been able to stand the strain of her extravagance. He had tried to remonstrate with her. They had had several readjustments before the end came, but she had been unreasonable and intractable. She had run up bills which she knew he could never pay, out of sheer deviltry, it would seem. Even that last winter, when she had been planning to leave him, she had ordered twelve new dresses just when she had known he was hardest up. He had managed to pay the dressmakers—he had felt that they needed it most—but the jeweler and the furrier were still unpaid. Their bills came regularly every first of the month. He had thought once or twice of sending them on to her, but he didn't consider it quite a white thing to do, and, besides, he had always tried to keep her from being worried.

Then his mind went back by slow degrees to the first time he had seen her—the crowded concert, where a long-haired violinist had played interminably, and her gray eyes across the room, scornful, amused, appealing.

He recalled the night he had asked her to marry him, and the time, a week later, when she had confessed to him that the only dowry she could bring him was several thousand dollars' worth of debts. She had cried a little on his shoulder, and he had wiped away the tears and reassured her. Also, he remembered with what a proud feeling he had paid the debts a few weeks later. It was such a joy to be able to assist her! True, the debts had amounted to more than she had said, but that was doubtless a mistake on her part. She had never been good at figures.

He had thought that they might shorten their wedding journey a little in order that the loss of the money might not be felt—he really had had to plan his expenses very carefully—but Lynette had seemed so disappointed when he had suggested it that he had not had the heart to insist. So they had gone, as they had first planned, to southern France. In fact, as it turned out, the honeymoon had been quite a little longer and a good deal more expensive than he had dreamed of its being.

However, there were other memories than these rather sordid ones. There was the vision of Lynette in her bridal dress. How sweet she had looked as she had raised her trusting gray eyes to his there at the altar! He remembered how, after the crush of the reception, they had got away with confetti all over them and old shoes and white ribbons dangling from the motor; how she had lain in his arms that night, and how she had trembled! And now she was going to marry Billy Van Vliet!

He put the letter into his pocket and

went out into the lobby of the club. As he neared a group of young men, he heard his wife's name mentioned. Had they the news already? Involuntarily he stopped. He heard Gerald Vandergrief saying hotly:

"Lynette Royden mayn't have much heart, but she's a damned good sort! And I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head, Dick Armstrong!"

"Oh, no offense, no offense," the other replied mildly. "I didn't know she was such a friend of yours."

"Thinking of stepping into Royden's shoes?" inquired Harold Ralston sweetly.

They looked up and saw Cyril Royden standing only a few feet away. There was an awkward pause. Then Gerald Vandergrief took up the threads of an imaginary conversation:

"Well, if you took seven on the fourth green, you haven't anything on me."

Cyril passed the group and went out of the club. As he left, Vandergrief took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"That was a narrow squeak!" he said. "I hope, after this, you won't crack your bally jokes so promiscuously, Ralston!"

"Do you suppose he heard?" asked Dick Armstrong in an awed tone.

Cyril *had* heard! It was evident that they hadn't the news yet. Lynette had told him the truth when she had said that he was the first to know. But they would have it soon, oh, very soon!

CHAPTER II.

The first time that Cyril met Lynette Van Vliet after her marriage was on the porch of the Larchmont Clubhouse several months later. He had known that she was there because he had met Van Vliet talking with some men outside the house. She had no inkling of his approach until he stood before her,

but she held out her hand with a bright, frank smile.

"How are you, Cyril?" she said.

He muttered something in return about not having expected to see her so soon—the Van Vliets had gone to Hawaii for their honeymoon—and asked rather maudlinly if Van Vliet was well. He was very much embarrassed.

She answered lightly:

"Oh, yes, we've been back some time. We had to come down for the races. Billy has entered a new boat—the *Margot Second*. Let me give you a tip—back it against any boat of its class in the Sound and you'll triple your money! I have the information direct from Billy, so of course it must be true!"

She laughed adorably and turned to Harold Ralston, who stood beside her. Her worst enemies could not deny that Lynette had charm. She was as full of it as a rose is of fragrance. She continued to chat about unimportant things while Cyril stood staring dumbly at her. She was dressed, as always, in the most perfect taste, and there was that air of subdued wealth about her which she had managed to assume even when she had been living with her penniless father. And she was perfectly at her ease, even if Cyril was not. He knew that it was absurd for him to feel like this. Why, when she treated him in this frank, engaging fashion, could he not assume ease, too? Surely, if there were any blame, it was not his. Why should he stand before her and their friends with this guilty, hangdog look? Why couldn't he laugh with them over Billy's enthusiasms, which he knew were a standing joke in their set?

He knew that the world would expect this of him, and yet all he could think of was the fact that this woman had been his wife. He should be more modern, he reflected; this kind of thing

was done every day among their sort. He had known that she would certainly marry again; yet, in spite of it all, there was that old, primitive instinct that she was his—his, not to be taken away by any man.

While his mind ran over these things, he managed, by monosyllabic replies, to keep up his end of the conversation until the group moved off to get tea, when he pleaded another engagement.

With quick steps he made his way to his motor and was soon back in his rooms in town. He tried to read a little; then suggested to himself a musical comedy, and thought wildly of taking some of the chorus out to supper. But after he had planned it, the idea disgusted him. What did he want of more women? Had he not had enough of them? Now he was through. But he must do something to take his mind from Lynette Van Vliet.

At length he decided to start at once for the West. His man was out, so he packed himself, rather wildly, the few articles he would need for the railroad journey, and left written instructions for his other things to be sent on after him. By seven o'clock he was speeding westward. His plans were undecided, but he thought he would take time to think things out.

CHAPTER III.

Shortly after Royden's hurried departure for the West, the Van Vliets went down to their country place on Long Island. Just now there were assembled there only a dozen close friends, and the atmosphere of the house was most informal. On this particular morning, Lynette Van Vliet was sitting in bed, propped up with pillows and attired in an apricot-colored negligee which her maid had placed about her shoulders. From time to time, she sipped chocolate from a Sèvres cup that stood beside her on a little table. On

the side of her bed, flicking at its lace valance with his crop, sat Gerald Vandergrief in riding clothes. He was tall and straight and young, and his hair was full of adorable little curls, and the exercise of his early-morning canter had brought the color to his cheeks. Lynette, looking at him critically between sips of chocolate, decided that he was more like a Greek god than any one she had ever seen. She thought, with a little sigh of regret, of Billy, particularly the Billy of last night. Her thoughts being ever close to words, she spoke impatiently:

"Wasn't Billy a beast last night? He drank a frightful lot!"

"He was a bit on," agreed Gerald absently. He went on flicking at the laces.

"Rather!" echoed Lynette. "And it isn't as if he were decent when he's drunk," she added. "Some people are, but Billy's not! He gets so amorous. You've no idea, Jerry, how perfectly horrid he can be!"

Gerald looked up suddenly.

"It's rotten luck, Lyn! I'm no end sorry. But how did you come—— I never have understood it, you know—— your throwing over Royden and all that. Personally, I always thought Royden a good sort."

Lynette threw out her hands with a little gesture of helplessness.

"So did I," she said. "I liked him immensely. But what could one do? It was money, my dear, simply money. Didn't the prophet say the lack of money is the root of all evil? Well, you see, Billy has it and Cyril didn't. That's the answer."

"You're a heartless devil!" said Gerald shortly.

Lynette laughed, but she felt that some softening was due.

"And then dear Cyril was so frightfully high-minded! High-minded people are all very well to admire from a distance, but they're a bit tedious to live with. There have been times when

I've been afraid you were inclined to be high-minded, Jerry. Don't. It's so——so——" She failed to find a simile, so she smiled at him and went on: "Then, you see, Cyril used to lecture; Billy never does, which is a great point of superiority. Remember that when you marry, dear."

"I?" Gerald shrugged. "I, my dear girl, never mean to marry."

"No?" said Lynette. "That's very selfish of you, Jerry."

"You see," he said, "to me the word 'marriage' has always represented a condition, charming, no doubt, but totally unsuited to men of my temperament. Love, my dear, leads down the most delightful path in the world, filled with the whispering of forests, the singing of birds——"

"Hear! Hear!" cried Lynette, clapping her hands.

"Don't interrupt," said Gerald. "This is a really neat little speech, and I don't often make them. To continue, then, along this road are deep pits, pleasantly concealed with flowers and likely to catch the unwary."

"Ah-h-h!" said Lynette in a tragic tone.

"But for the initiated," continued Gerald, "they are plainly marked with a danger signal labeled 'marriage.' These I have always carefully avoided, and, please God, always shall!"

"Jerry, you'd make a ripping clergyman!" Lynette interrupted. "But you're a frightful misogynist!"

"Ah, my dear, it isn't that I dislike your sex," Gerald warmed to his subject. "Far from it! But, as some one has put it, I 'dread the compromising domesticity of marriage.' And as I prefer not alone my liberty, but the preservation of my good nature as well, I put no unnecessary strain on that none-too-stable virtue."

Lynette was listening with interest.

"I see," she said gravely. Then she smiled a little. "But how sorry you'll

be not to have any children, Jerry. You're so awfully fond of them."

"Ah," he said, "there I shall not be forsaken, either. Although I have planned for myself a long, comfortable, and—provided I do not become obese—a happy life of bachelorhood, yet I mean to be the 'Uncle Jerry' of all my friends' children. I shall take your kiddies to the theater in the Christmas holidays—"

"You will *not*!" said Lynette.

Gerald paid no attention to the interruption.

"And when they tire me, I shall return them thankfully to your care. I shall appear at your house with timely gifts of toys and bonbons," he continued with feeling. "I shall be the always welcomed and the never missed, the always—"

"I say, Jerry, what are you ranting so about?" called a voice from the doorway.

Madge Henry entered unannounced from Lynette's dressing room. She had her toothbrush in her hand, and there were evidences about her mouth that she had imperfectly finished her ablutions. "You're addressing Lynette as if she were a public meeting. What's the game?"

Without waiting for an answer, she dropped suddenly onto the corner of the bed opposite Gerald and swung her satin mule meditatively on her toes. Then she turned to Lynette.

"That husband of yours," she said, without further introduction, "is a low worm. I'm most awfully down on him."

Lynette laughed.

"What is it now?" she asked. Madge's quarrels with Billy were proverbial.

"Do you know," said Madge, "that he had the cheek to tell me last night, when I said daddy was his own architect for the new tea house we've built, that he'd seen daddy when he thought he was his own tailor?"

Gerald restrained his mirth with difficulty, the description fitted the old man so perfectly.

"And what did you say?" he asked.

"I told him I'd rather look like my own tailor than my own bar!"

"The retort courteous," murmured Gerald, and Lynette laughed again. Her maid came and removed the chocolate set.

"Your bath is ready, madame," she announced, but Lynette waved her away. Madge continued aggrievedly: "I don't know why Billy should be so rude to me! I've always been very nice to him!"

"And yet," said Lynette reflectively, "Billy was educated to be a civil engineer."

"I don't think he's a bit civil," said Madge.

Gerald shouted with laughter.

The discussion was cut short by the appearance of Billy in the doorway, with a towel tied around his head.

"You're all making such an infernal noise—" he began crossly.

Gerald looked up and laughed.

"The cold gray dawn, eh, Billy?"

Billy gave a faint groan and sank onto the corner of the bed opposite Madge.

"My dear," he said, to no one in particular, "I'm never going to take another drink again as long as I live."

Gerald laughed again and brought out his cigarette case.

"Have one?" he ventured.

Billy turned on him the look of a murderer.

Lynette reached for one from the silver box on her table and lit it. Madge sat tapping her teeth with her toothbrush.

"Smoking, little one?" Gerald asked her.

She shook her head.

"I never could bear them early like this."

Billy leaned over and seized her hands, toothbrush and all.

"Madge, my girl," he said with feeling, "now I know that you are the only woman I have ever really loved. Let's go and drink a glass of cold water together."

Gerald and Lynette screamed with laughter. Billy turned an indignant glare on them.

"Of all the heartless, unfeeling brutes——" he began, but Lynette waved him away.

"Yes, you can clear out," she said, "all of you. I must get my bath or it'll be stone cold, and I detest a cold bath. Now out of here, all of you!"

Later, she ordered her writing materials and sat down very seriously to compose a letter to Cyril Royden. It was necessary to word it very carefully, and this is what she wrote:

The Hall, Westacre, L. I.

DEAR CYRIL: I am so very sorry to have to write you about unpleasant things, but you see, dear, I must. You remember those debts which I contracted, oh, ever so long ago? Well, it seems they have never been paid, for some reason—I'm sure it is not your fault!—but, anyway, the horrid tradespeople have sent them to me! Of course you know that I have no money of my own, and so there was nothing to do but ask Billy to pay them. I put it off as long as I could, for you know we're opening the town house this year, as well as the Hall, and Billy has a great many new expenses. When I broached the subject, Billy was sweet about it, but he made one remark that hurt me. He said, dear, that he thought it was a poor sort of man who would let another man pay his wife's debts. Dear Cyril, I hate to have any one, even Billy, say that about you, and so I am writing to offer you the chance to pay them first. I thought you would want to. Am I right? I'm sure you will see things as I do and will take what I have said kindly.

And now that I have got over the disagreeable part, I am going to ask a favor of you. It is that you come down to the Hall to make us a little visit. For my sake, Cyril, because I want to keep you always a very dear friend. We shall be here most of the summer, but I am in hopes you can come to

us about the twelfth. We shall have a jolly party here then. Billy will love to have you, and I needn't tell you how glad I shall be. Cyril dear, I know you will understand. Affectionately,
LYNETTE.

She read the letter over with a quizzical little smile, sealed and stamped it, and, dispensing with the services of her maid, delivered it with her own hands to the post.

CHAPTER IV.

When Cyril Royden received Lynette's note, his first feeling was one of speechless rage. The reaction of his anger against his former wife was a bitter feeling of his own guilt. After all, there was something in what Van Vliet had said. It was a poor man who would let another man pay his wife's debts. Alone in his misery, Cyril groveled in self-abasement.

The result of his cogitations was that he wired the garage to sell his car at once, and he made arrangements for dismissing his valet at the end of the month. Even these privations he found did not go very far toward reducing the debts, and he decided to return to New York at once to see what he could realize on his income. He hoped to be able to save enough to live still like a gentleman.

Three weeks later, armed with the receipts and cursing himself for a fool, Royden went down to the Hall. He knew that he should have posted the papers to Lynette, that it was the folly of the moth for the flame for him to go himself, but something tempted him and he yielded.

At the station, he met Maisie Cruthers and Dick Armstrong. They were unable to conceal their surprise at seeing him there, and Cyril was instantly aware of the fact that gossip had been busy with the story of his sudden flight West after his first meeting with Lynette as Billy's wife.

He rode to the Hall in the trap beside Maisie with a mingled feeling of embarrassment and resentment. Why was he sacrificing half of his fortune for a woman who had laid him open to this? He decided that he would return to town as soon as the business that had brought him was dispatched.

Lynette, however, was out on the links when they arrived, and Billy was not to be found, so Cyril felt obliged to stay. Gerald Vandergrief, who was smoking on the veranda, ignoring Miss Cruthers' raised eyebrows, came forward with such well-feigned unconsciousness of anything peculiar in Cyril's presence there that Cyril could have wept on his neck with gratitude. Instead of which, they shook hands heartily and strolled off together to look for Van Vliet. By dinner time, every one had become accustomed to the idea of his being there, and at table they were very merry. But Cyril, sitting there with the papers bulging his dress coat and a heart hot with resentment, hated them for their gayety.

Madge and Billy had been quarreling again. Madge, in a whining treble, was voicing her grievances to a sympathetic audience.

"And then he said—he actually, had the nerve to tell me to my face——" She paused dramatically, to let the horror of it sink in on her hearers.

"The will, the will!" groaned Dick Armstrong.

"He said"—Madge drew a long breath—"that I'd get a husband if I didn't struggle so!"

They all screamed with laughter.

"Never mind, Madge," said Maisie Cruthers soothingly. "There are lots of things we need worse than a husband, aren't there?"

Elsie Graham struck in.

"When I marry," she said, "I mean to have them play 'The Strife is O'er' instead of the 'Wedding March.'"

There was another shout of laughter.

Ursula Trowbridge turned the conversation to clothes. She was just back from Paris, and she had been buying such a lot of the loveliest dresses, perfect ducks!

"Is it a trousseau?" Lynette asked.

Ursula smiled brightly.

"Only a courting trousseau. That's really more important than a wedding trousseau, because, after all, you don't run for a train when you've caught it, do you?"

"No," said Billy, speaking for the first time, "but you have to pay your fare or you get put off."

"Billy's such a realist!" murmured Elsie Graham.

"Billy," said Lynette, "was damned in his early youth. First his baptism didn't take, and then the poor dear had such a shocking discussion with the rector at the village! It was that time he fell from his horse and broke his head, to say nothing of all the commandments. Anyway, the rector called, and they got into a discussion of the Bible. It came about because, it seems, Billy didn't believe that Jonah swallowed the whale or the whale swallowed Jonah—I forget which it is. So the rector said, quite distinctly, that poor, dear Billy would go straight to—well, not to heaven."

"After all, I've always thought there would be pleasanter company in hell," murmured Gerald.

Lynette laughed.

"I, too," she said. "And then sitting on a damp cloud and playing a jew's-harp has somehow never appealed to me. Besides, I know I shouldn't like traveling by my own power. I'm much too fond of my comfort."

Lynette's sally was greeted with roars of laughter. Cyril found their mirth intolerable. He felt out of it, an alien. It was with relief that he saw the women leave the dining room.

He had meant to speak at once on the subject that had brought him there,

but he found the idea of discussing it with Billy intolerable. Later, alone with Lynette, it was easier. She took from him the receipts that represented months of denial with a light touch, glanced over them carelessly, and tossed them on the table. Then she turned on him one of her rare smiles.

"Dear Cyril," she said, "I'm so glad the horrid things are all settled! Now I have only one more worry left, and that is about you. Why don't you marry some nice girl? There's Ursula Trowbridge. I've asked her down especially for you. Do fall in love with her!"

He turned from her with a grim smile. A lot she had left him with which to make happy a new wife! His eye fell on the receipts, and he laughed harshly. She saw that she had made a wrong move. She hastened to cover her mistake.

"Don't be cross with me, Cyril," she pleaded. "I'm selfish, but I'm not all bad, and I do desire your happiness so much. Cyril, for the sake of those old days——"

"For the sake of those old days," he repeated dully. Suddenly he turned on her: "Lynette, what are you saying? Do you want to drive me mad? God, if I had you back, how differently I'd play the game! You wouldn't have left me then! You would never have left me! I ought to have locked you up, starved you, beaten you, killed you, perhaps, but you would have been mine always—mine and only mine!"

There was a dangerous light in his eyes. His words, coming hot and fast, struck some answering chord in her. For a moment she was swayed by his voice. She felt a thrill of the old ecstasy. Then Billy's voice at the door recalled her to the present.

"I say," he began thickly, "are you two going to stay here talking all night? They want you in the billiard room, Lynette."

Lynette whisked the newly won receipts deftly off the table and slipped out of the room. Van Vliet stood a moment uncertainly in the doorway. He, too, sensed something delicate in the situation. With a motion half friendly, half shy, he offered his cigarette case to Royden. On being refused, he turned to leave, but Royden, with a gesture, stopped him. Something in Lynette's manner of lifting the receipts, something in her haste, had aroused a vague suspicion in his mind. A feeling that he must, himself, justify his case to this man who, after all, was a gentleman, moved him to speak.

"If you don't mind giving me a moment, Van Vliet," he began.

"Certainly, quite at your service," responded the other, obviously uncomfortable.

"It's about those bills that Lynette owed before she married you," Cyril began.

"It's of no consequence," said Billy, fumbling with his light.

Cyril raised his eyebrows. It was full of consequences to him. Billy felt, rather than saw, the look. He glanced up quickly.

"What's Lynette been saying to you?" he asked suddenly.

"Nothing—that is, I've just managed to pay them, and I brought her the receipts to-day. I regret having been so long about it. I owe you an apology." Cyril's voice was frigid.

Billy sat looking up at him, blinking his pale little eyes.

"You mean the jewelers, tailors—those fellows?" he asked. "Why, man, I paid those months ago."

"I think not," said Cyril icily. "They took my money. You have remarked, I believe, that it was a poor sort of man who let another man pay his wife's bills. I am, at least, a poor man, which is why they were not paid before. I've done the best I could."

Billy sat blinking his eyes and looking a picture of misery.

"I never said that about any man, Royden, least of all about you. I know Lynette's extravagant——" A light broke in on him. "When I said I'd paid them, I meant that I'd given the money to Lynette to pay them. She told me you'd sent them on to her."

He stopped. Cyril looked so crushed that Billy felt obliged to make some excuses for his wife.

"That's just Lynette's little way," he remarked. "She's put one over on us both. I dare say you weren't married to Lynette for several years without discovering that she's a great little liar. Perhaps you'd allow me to refund your money?" he ventured diffidently.

But Cyril held his head up and played the game.

"I'm delighted not to have been denied the opportunity to discharge my obligations," he said.

CHAPTER V.

The next day Cyril met Lynette on the terrace in front of the house. She was returning from giving some orders to the head gardener in regard to the rhododendrons. Cyril stopped her abruptly.

"Why did you lie to me?" he demanded.

She looked up at him, puzzled, smiling a little.

"Lie to you?" she repeated. "When?"

"Your husband——" he began.

"Oh, Billy!" she said and gave a little shrug and laughed.

Cyril caught her sternly by the arm. "You're not fit even for him!" he said.

She drew her arm away and stepped back from him, cool and self-possessed.

"Cyril, if we must have these heroes, at least choose a more retired spot. At present we're in the direct line of vision of sixteen open windows.

I will not be made ridiculous before a dozen servants, to say nothing of my guests!"

He dropped his hand with a muttered apology. She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, and then led the way to the grove at the farther end of the terrace. If he must have a scene, that would be the best place to stage it. There would be no one there at this hour. Cyril walked at her side, silent, morose.

"Now," she said, when they had reached the shelter of the thick trees, "what do you wish to say?"

In the face of her terrible calm, he was tongue-tied. It all seemed suddenly so sordid. How could he say, "You have cheated me! You have stolen money from me under false pretenses!" to this charmingly smiling woman. She was charming, but cold and scornful. He suddenly felt a great desire to make her angry.

"Well?" she was saying. He knew that little smile on her lips. It meant that she was aware that she had beaten him. He looked up at her from under his brows, shamefaced.

She became too sure of her victory; she should have remembered his outbreak of the night before. She laughed.

The sound stung him like the lash of a whip. In an instant, she was in his arms, panting from the suddenness of the contact. Atavism was rife in his soul. He felt the old, primitive desire to subdue. His fingers itched to be at her throat. He clawed at her feverishly. The pent-up fires of months of repression surged through him. He tore at the thin material covering her shoulders, and the light stuff gave in his hands. With a savage clutch, he wrenched her waist half off. He dug his fingers brutally into her naked shoulders, and they left angry red marks on her white skin. He was intoxicated, mad. Only her voice recalled him to his senses.

"Cyril, Cyril, be merciful!"

As suddenly as it had come, the storm passed. He dropped his arms, his head sank on his breast, and he reeled off like a drunken man into the shadow of the woods.

Trembling and unstrung, Lynette straightened her hair, slipped her waist back on her shoulders, and, holding it in place, ran toward the house, hoping fervently to meet no one.

In this she was disappointed, for by the steps to the sunken garden she came face to face with Gerald Vandergrief. She tried to brush by him, but he stopped her. He began talking lightly, not having noticed her disorder, but Lynette was unable to cope with the situation. For the first time in her life, she had been really frightened. She struggled with her tears, but they would come. Without a word, Gerald led her down the steps and into one of the little arbors.

"Better wait to go to the house till you're feeling more fit," he suggested. "Never mind about me."

He stood with his back to her until she had stopped crying. When she had pulled herself together somewhat, he came and sat beside her and patted her hand gently.

"Tell me all about it," he suggested. "It'll do you good to get it off your chest, and I'm only an old fogey who doesn't count. And a regular clam about secrets," he added.

Lynette smiled through her tears, the description fitted him so badly. But the desire to talk was strong, and she yielded to it. Bit by bit, the story came out. She told him, not alone about Cyril, but about her early life, things she had never breathed to a soul before. In spite of his good looks, Gerald had a kind of sexless, priestlike manner that made it easy for her to confess to him, and the lifting of the floodgates did her good.

"I know I'm a liar!" she wailed.

"I've always been a liar! I've had to be! But I'm not bad, Jerry, really I'm not! None of you people here know what I've gone through—what my life has been! You people with comfortable incomes don't know what it's like to have to plot and scheme to get every little thing, even to keep your place in society—to have to endure the snubs of people you despise, and make up to people you hate! And then the tradespeople! Oh, you don't any of you know about those hideous days in Paris when dad and I lived on nothing at all but credit! I've had to lie and coax and wheedle all my life. It seems as if I'd been at it ever since I was born! Why, when I wasn't more than fourteen, I could tell a creditor by the look in his eye.

"It was a hard school, and I learned my lesson young. I could tell you experiences by the hour—how dad used to slip out through the fishmonger's shop in the back while I interviewed the tradespeople. Oh, I got expert at it, I can tell you! I used to take a kind of pride in it! Dad and I would bet on what I could get out of each new acquaintance, out of every one that crossed our path. They were all fish that came into my net, and I grew to study every one, high and low alike, for what they were worth to me. I used to hate it all very often, but, you see, we had our position to keep up. It isn't like being awfully low; then you can let things slide. D'you suppose it wasn't hard for me? I used to hate those smug-faced girls who bowed to me in the park. They looked so innocent and didn't have to plan and scheme to get their pretty things, as I did. And I've always been fond of pretty things. I vowed I would have them and I did! And I always will have them!" she added fiercely.

"They're over now, thank God, those awful days, but I'm not as if I'd been brought up as you all have been. I'm

bitter all through! And it's always there, back of everything, like a hideous nightmare!

"You see I had to do it all myself, for dad didn't help me much. If it hadn't been for me, we'd have been down and out long ago. But the weariness of it, the everlasting watchfulness! When it got too hot for us in Paris, we went to London, and then to Vienna. After that, we tried New York, and I came out. New York was the easiest of all to fool, but even they got suspicious. For years I got all my gloves and little things like that on bets. Even an occasional hat. You see, I always forgot to pay when I lost. Some shops will give dresses if you recommend them casually to your friends. There are lots of ways. I tried them all, and then Cyril came along."

She stopped. Gerald regarded her calmly.

"Why didn't you take a richer man?" he asked. "There were plenty to choose from."

Lynette gave a little sob.

"You'll laugh at me, I know, but I came as near to loving Cyril as it is possible for a girl brought up as I have been to love any one. It was the one foolishness I ever permitted myself. I thought we could manage, with his income and my genius for getting credit." She laughed mirthlessly and went on: "But, you see, we couldn't. Cyril's afraid of debt. Dad and I never were. He couldn't understand my point of view, nor I his. It was hopeless. I went back to my old Paris tactics and got what I could out of him. Then I took up Billy."

She laughed again in the same hard way.

"Billy's good for quite a while yet," she added.

Gerald opened his eyes wide.

"*La Belle Dame sans Merci!*" he murmured.

Lynette rose, quite calm now.

"You're right," she said. "I'm heartless. Don't be afraid to let me see what you think. And thank you for letting me talk to you this way, Jerry. It's helped a lot. No, it isn't necessary for you to go to the house with me. Good-by."

She trailed off through the garden, while Gerald stood looking after her, lost in thought. He shook his head and lighted a cigarette. He felt genuinely sorry for Lynette, but, after all, she could be trusted to take care of herself. Billy would have to be left to his fate. He would survive all right; he was not the kind that goes under. But it was the perversity of fate that Cyril Royden should still care for Lynette. For it was evident, even to the most obtuse, that this was the case. Men do not make the scenes that Lynette had described to him unless they feel strongly. The man ought to be saved; it wasn't just! He threw away his cigarette. After all, why should he play the *deus ex machina*? And yet there was an idea taking shape in his brain. He shook himself and decided he'd better mind his own affairs, but the thought persisted.

CHAPTER VI.

On quitting the arbor, Gerald made his way through the long lanes of Billy's garden, which was in the full flush of its midsummer loveliness. At the end of a particularly beautiful alley of coreopsis, he came upon Maisie Cruthers, curled up on a bench reading a letter. She looked up as he came along and hailed him.

"Hello, Jerry! Come and let me talk to you. I'm in a devil of a mess. Come and be sympathetic and let me tell you my troubles."

"There's nothing for which I am better fitted," he murmured, as he sank down on the bench beside her. "In

fact, it seems to have become my vocation in life."

"Who's just been boring you?" she asked.

"Not boring, my dear girl, by no means boring! The troubles of a beautiful woman——"

"It was Lynette, wasn't it? I saw you from the terrace. Poor Lynette, I suppose she is worried. Sometimes I think she doesn't know where her next Rolls-Royce is coming from!" She laughed and plunged into her own story: "It's a letter, as you might guess, from Aunt Ruth. She says I should marry!"

"A very wise suggestion!"

"And she's picked out the man."

"How extremely thorough and businesslike of the old lady! You should be grateful for such touching concern for your welfare," he admonished her.

Maisie pouted.

"Jerry, how can you be such a brute? You don't even know who the man is."

"At all events," said Gerald, "I'm sure he is unworthy."

"Ah," said Maisie, "you got out of that very nicely. And, Jerry, I rather agree with you. I think he is unworthy."

"How we hate ourselves!" he murmured.

"Oh, very well!" said Maisie indignantly. "If you're going to take that tone, we needn't discuss it any more." She slipped the letter back into its envelope.

Gerald protested.

"Oh, I say, Maisie, this won't do. You've got to tell me who it is. How am I to know that I'm not the victim?"

"You!" she said with great scorn.

Gerald tried again.

"Come, be a sport, Maisie, and read me the letter. How am I to give you the benefit of my sound, grandfatherly advice if you don't show me perfect confidence?"

Maisie drew the letter out again.

"Very well, read a part."

She handed it to him.

"My dearest niece," he read aloud. "It is with a very full sense of my responsibility as your only living female relative that I compose myself to write you on the occasion of your twenty-sixth birthday——" Is it only your twenty-sixth?" said Gerald. "I had thought you were older."

Maisie brought the point of her parasol down on his toes. He went back to the letter.

"That you should be happy has always been my first consideration, as you must realize, so I trust that you will pardon my speaking quite frankly on a subject which has troubled me much of late. In my day, young ladies of your position were, almost invariably, married or at least betrothed at your age, and although I know that time has changed many customs, I still maintain that early marriages tend to the stability and the good of the country. I say it in all reverence that marriage is the one state in which woman finds her greatest happiness and fulfills her highest duty."

"Wise old dame!" interposed Gerald.

"That you, my dear girl, should attain this happy state is the dearest wish of my heart, and for its fullest realization, I believe that the woman, at least, should enter it in all the freshness of youth and purity."

"She evidently considers it an eye opener," observed Maisie, lighting a cigarette.

Gerald read on:

"Marriage with a good man, suitably established, is a condition than which there is none more blessed."

"H'm," Maisie murmured doubtfully.

"Marriage," continued Gerald, "with an unsuitable person is the extreme of misery."

"She means less than three millions," explained Maisie between puffs.

"My dear girl, the young people

who are your friends, I am afraid, are given to frivolity. I hesitate to call them "fast." And I regret to say that rumors have reached me which, I cannot say, I will not say, compromise you —" Gerald interrupted himself. "Poor, dear Aunt Ruth," he said, "little knows how difficult it is in these days to get compromised."

Maisie laughed.

"There is, among others in your party, I am told—and it is verified by your letter—a young man who is typical of the sort of man I would have you avoid. I cannot remember his name—not having your letter by me—but you will probably know whom I mean."

Maisie suddenly sat up.

"I say," she began, "I forgot that part."

"We will read it, nevertheless," said Gerald severely. "Hello! This is interesting! 'He is of good family and is doubtless clever, but for many years he has wasted his time in useless frivolities and ignoble pursuits. That you may recognize him, I need only add that he is the constant companion of your present hostess, and is always to be found in her train.'"

Gerald came to a full stop. Maisie was playing with the tassels on her parasol.

"I think she means," she stammered, "I think she means——"

Gerald frowned at her.

"It is not," he interrupted, "at all necessary to explain whom she means. I recognized the portrait at once. Let us go on with the letter."

Maisie retired behind her cigarette.

"In striking contrast," Gerald read, "to this young man' (you get that, Maisie—in striking contrast?) 'is—what's this?—'is young Mr. Armstrong!'"

Gerald put down the letter. "Well, I'll be damned!" he ejaculated.

Maisie gathered up her belongings.

"If you're going to curse and swear —" she began.

Gerald apologized.

"But you must admit, Maisie, that it's a bit thick to have Dick Armstrong held up to one as a shining example of the domestic virtues."

He read further.

"But I see the old lady is on to some of his faults, too. Listen to this: 'That he has sown some wild oats is undeniable.' I should think it was!" he interjected. "About a ten-acre lot of them! 'But these may be excused on the ground of his youth and great wealth, and may be regarded as merely the ebullition of high spirits. Many things, my dear child, are excusable in men which convention rightly condemns in women.'" He put down the letter. "At least the old sport is a firm believer in the double standard."

"Don't be silly!" Maisie remonstrated. "Read the rest."

Gerald continued:

"You will not, I am sure, be angry with me when I tell you that, with the approval of your brother Tom, I have taken the liberty of speaking on this subject to Mrs. Armstrong, senior. She was charmed with the idea, and she agrees with me that that marriage would at once settle her dear Richard and bring him to a just sense of the dignity and usefulness of his important place in the community."

"But," said Maisie, "I distinctly object to being used as a reformatory!"

"Nevertheless," said Gerald, as he folded the letter, "I should say that your duty was plain."

Maisie began to pout again.

Then suddenly Gerald remembered the plan that had half formed in his mind. Might not this be the solution of Cyril Royden's problem? Was it vaguely possible that he and Maisie Cruthers could be brought together? He realized, in a sudden flash, that she would make just the wife for Cyril.

Gerald recognized it as a fact that women brought up in luxurious surroundings are less apt to develop into extravagant wives than those who have been accustomed to frugality. It doesn't go to their heads, as it were. In this respect, Maisie Cruthers suited admirably, for she was more or less wealthy in her own right, and she and her brother were the only heirs to the far greater fortune of their aunt. In addition, she was bright, vivacious, and withal sensible. Heretofore, he had thought in a vague way of Ursula Trowbridge, but Ursula was volatile, inclined to be flippant, and, he suspected, ambitious. The Cyril Roydens of the world would scarcely suit her. Maisie Cruthers was the better tip! He thanked his stars for having thrown her in his way that morning. There is no time like the present, he reflected, so he set to work.

"My dear girl, I quite agree with your aunt and your brother Tom. It is indeed high time you were married."

Maisie laughed.

"Oh, as for Tom," she said, "he's just done it himself, you know. He's like the fox who lost his tail. He wants every one else to try it."

Gerald felt that this was not an auspicious beginning. He started again.

"But while I agree with them in a general way, I see no reason why Dick Armstrong should be the—er—lucky man."

"You almost said 'victim' again!" Maisie reproached him.

Gerald denied it.

"Surely," he continued, "there are far more attractive men in the world, and not so far from here."

Maisie suddenly looked up.

"Jerry, are you proposing to me?" she asked.

Gerald started.

"Good heavens, no!" he protested.

"Oh," said Maisie calmly, "I thought you were. It sounded very much like

it. Never mind, Jerry, there's no need to make it more emphatic. The enthusiasm of your denial was quite convincing enough. Uncomplimentary, but convincing."

He felt that some explanation was due.

"What if I were speaking on behalf of some one else?" he ventured.

Maisie looked puzzled.

"Oh, I see," she said at length, "a sort of John Alden affair. And who, in this case, is the bashful Miles?"

She was poking fun at him now, he realized. He felt confused. After all, no one had authorized him to speak. He tried to explain this and was not very successful. With a little shake, Maisie rose and gathered her belongings together, and this time she really went.

"Jerry," she said at parting, "I think you're the worst little busybody I ever met!"

It was discouraging, most discouraging, but he comforted himself with the reflection that the way of reformers is proverbially hard.

CHAPTER VII.

Cyril Royden, after his scene with Lynette, plunged into the woods and walked a great distance without pausing for an instant. He went across fields and meadows, through woods and over fences, until he was thoroughly exhausted, telling himself over and over what a cad and a fool he had been. He returned late and went directly to his room, where he wrote a long letter of apology to Lynette and prepared to pack his bags. In a few minutes her maid brought him a reply:

You will serve me better by remaining. Your going now, suddenly like this, would cause talk. Please act as if nothing had happened.

L.

So he stayed. It seemed that he could not escape. Gerald realized that it was Lynette's doing when he saw

Cyril's white, drawn face in the drawing-room that evening. He, too, had expected Cyril to leave.

He noticed with concern that Lynette and Cyril disappeared together for a while in the music room, but he could not know how Cyril stood before her, very humble, very contrite, calling his conduct by its right name and begging for his release.

Any other woman than Lynette Van Vliet would have pitied him. His outburst of that afternoon had at the time appalled her. But it had also awakened a sleeping emotion, an emotion half savage and wholly delightful. She had been frightened, humiliated, and betrayed into revealing secrets to Gerald Vandergrief, yet back of it all was a kind of exaltation in the proof this strong man had given her that he still loved her. It had shown in his masterful strength, and the eternal feminine ever cries out for a touch of the brute in man. It showed now in his hungry eyes, in his subservience to her wishes. She knew that she could keep him always beside her if she so desired, and just now she did desire it. Something of that cruelty which makes a cat delight in torturing a mouse tempted her to make him remain near her.

"He will stay a while longer," she remarked with a little smile to Gerald, later that evening.

But Gerald did not smile.

"Lynette," he said, "let him go! Give him up! Do a decent thing for once in your life!"

Lynette only shrugged.

"Jerry, you're being very rude," she said.

So Gerald went back, discouraged, to watch a game of bridge which Cyril was also watching. Madge and Maisie were playing Dick Armstrong and Lewis Randolph. "As if matters were not bad enough without that damned game!" as Gerald told himself afterward. For both girls lost a good deal.

Madge, who always played with a fine disregard of rules, plunged even more than usual. Gerald saw Cyril look aghast at the sum Maisie wrote on the check that she handed to Lewis without a quiver. Gerald was angry. It was all very well for her to be so game a sport, but when he, Gerald, was taking all the trouble to manufacture a nice little romance for her, it was inconsiderate of her to let the prospective husband see how easily his money might go in a certain contingency. Altogether, it was not a successful evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

The following day, Gerald decided that the campaign must be more active. He ran over in his mind whom he could enlist. He searched his memory. Who was the man who had once successfully arranged a little affair of this kind? He remembered the general trend of the thing. Why, Shakespeare of course! He couldn't recall which of the plays it was, but he searched in the library until he found it. "Much Ado About Nothing," to be sure—the one about Beatrice and Benedict. He composed himself to read, but was interrupted almost immediately, for Dick Armstrong came in.

"Goin' ridin'?" he asked.

"Can't," replied Gerald, with equal brevity.

"The crowd's all goin'. You'd better come," Dick pursued.

"I'm busy, awfully busy." Gerald motioned to his book.

Dick came behind and looked over his shoulder.

"Shakespeare!" he gasped. "Well, you *are* balmy!"

Gerald gave him a withering glance.

"Mine were the advantages of a liberal education," he remarked. "In my early youth, I was well acquainted with this gentleman, of whom, by the way, I am surprised to learn you have

heard." He lowered the book. "If, young man, you were to follow my example of pursuing the intellectual, instead of the frivolous, of cultivating your mind rather than your somewhat overgrown body——"

"Oh, go to hell!" said Dick, and slammed the door.

Gerald smiled. He felt that he had paid Aunt Ruth back one, and he went at the book with renewed interest. He learned from his perusal of the play that the affair could not really be well managed alone. All the exigencies of the case seemed to require the aid of a confidential friend, whose duty it would be to inform Maisie of Cyril's undying love for her, while he performed the same offices for Cyril. It did sound a bit raw, though. The relapse of the custom of dying for love made things awkward. It would seem that Shakespeare had the easier time of it. Still, it might be done. He tried to decide on the confidante. The list was not reassuring. Ursula Trowbridge was too indifferent. Lynette must not know of the scheme; she would put a spoke in their wheel. There remained only Elsie Graham and Madge Henry. He reflected. Elsie would be sure to tell. She had too keen a sense of humor and would think it too good a joke to keep. Madge might do, but she was terribly stupid at times. Still, he might try.

He made the attempt after luncheon. As he had feared, it was not a success. His doubt had made him put it very tentatively. Would she help him bring two loving hearts together?—he put it something like that.

Madge was curious. Did he mean that some one wanted to elope?

Well, not exactly, he explained. In fact, the people concerned had no ideas on the matter at all. It was just a little plan of his own.

Madge opened her round blue eyes very wide.

"I never heard such nonsense in my life!" she gasped. She evidently put him down as mildly insane and would have nothing to do with the affair.

Gerald decided to throw Mr. Shakespeare over and had a good laugh at his own folly.

CHAPTER IX.

However, that evening Maisie announced her intention of riding again in the morning and called for volunteers to accompany her.

"I mean," she said, "to ride hundreds of miles. I shall probably not return till late in the evening. Now who will go with me? You all know what I'm like when I get a hunch like this."

They groaned. They all did know! And, like the men in the Bible, they began with one accord to make excuses.

"My dear," said Lynette, "it will be much too strenuous. I shall not stir out of the house to-morrow."

Maisie shrugged her shoulders.

"Furthermore," she announced, "I am going to ride Billy's new horse—the Cid."

Billy looked up.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" he said crossly. "You're too light and you couldn't hold him."

"Oh, but I shall ride him just the same," said Maisie calmly.

"In that case, I shall certainly not go," said Dick Armstrong. "I haven't the slightest desire to play the hero and bring you home in pieces."

Maisie made a face at him. Billy protested that she should not have the Cid, but they all knew that Maisie would have her own way. Besides, she rode well and was used to horses, so there was practically no danger. The party, however, fell off till it was reduced to Maisie, Gerald Vandergrief, and Cyril Royden.

That night Gerald had a brilliant

idea. He ended up a charming fox trot with Madge Henry by giving a bad twist to his ankle.

"Oh, dear," said Maisie disappointedly, "you won't want to ride to-morrow!"

"We'll see how it is in the morning," Gerald comforted her. He sat on a sofa and writhed in mock anguish while a sympathetic crowd waited on him.

In the morning he came down to breakfast limping badly. The pain had abated slightly, he announced, but riding was quite out of the question. It was confounded bad luck; he had wanted so much to join them. He really had had a rotten night. He winced at the remembrance of it. As a matter of fact, he had slept like a top. At length, installed in a deep porch chair with his foot supported on a pillow and raised on a stool, he watched Cyril and Maisie ride off with calm contentment.

"He looks awfully big and black," Ursula Trowbridge had said when the Cid was brought around, and Billy had added, "You'd better let Royden ride him instead, Maisie." But Maisie had stuck to her guns and declared that no one but she should ride the Cid that day.

When they were gone and the other guests out of the way, Gerald kicked away the stool that held his foot and danced a clog all by himself, by way of testing his ankle. One of the footmen caught him at it and had to be bribed to keep silence. Then he settled down to his book with the satisfied feeling of a man who has done his duty. He could not, of course, know the direction affairs would take.

It was about two, when the guests were assembling for luncheon, that a disheveled figure on horseback dashed up the drive. It was Maisie Cruthers on the bay horse, without either hat or coat and with an ominous red stain

across her white shirt. They crowded round her.

"It's Cyril," she panted. "He's lying out on the road about a half a mile from here. Some of you bring a car and send for a doctor."

Lynette Van Vliet went very white.

Maisie wheeled her horse about.

"I'm going back."

Gerald came alongside.

"Go easy," he said, "and I'll keep up with you."

She put the horse into a trot, and Gerald ran along, holding fast to the stirrup. Neither of them noticed that he had forgotten to limp. Maisie gasped out the story to him as they ran:

"We were just rounding that point in the road below the Grahams', when a car came around the curve suddenly, without sounding a horn. Both the horses were frightened and began to rear. Cyril got his under control fairly soon, but I had some trouble with the Cid. Just as he was getting composed again, another motor came in the opposite direction and he started off. I don't know what happened for a little while. Everything seemed to get black before my eyes. The Cid just tore along, and I couldn't do a thing. I thought each moment we were going to be dashed into eternity.

"Then I heard the sound of hoofs behind me, and after what seemed an endless time, Cyril managed to draw his horse up beside mine. I saw him catch my bridle and swing himself out of his saddle, and then— Oh, Jerry, it was awful! The Cid's knees came against his chest and I heard it, Jerry! I heard the bones crush!

"He dropped off, and a little farther on, the Cid came down quite easily. I ran back, and Cyril was lying quite still in a little heap. Jerry, I'm sure he's dead, but I didn't like to say it before Lynette. There didn't seem to be any one around, though I called and called.

I got him off the road and rolled up my coat and put it under his head and caught his horse and came to get you."

The tears were rolling down her cheeks as she talked. Gerald had no breath for words. A moment later, a motor passed them, with Lynette and Dick Armstrong and a couple of men in it.

The crumpled heap was carried back to the Van Vliets' house and deposited gently in bed. Doctors and nurses were summoned, and the house took on that general air of depression which accompanies an accident. A few of the guests went back to town; the rest tiptoed about and talked in grave whispers.

Maisie Cruthers, after a brief rest in her own room, ran down in a peignoir to Lynette's. She opened the door to find Lynette sitting at a table with her head resting on her arms.

"What do the doctors say?" Maisie asked her in a low voice.

Lynette raised a white, hopeless face to her visitor. She shook her head sadly.

"They say there's very little hope. He was very badly crushed."

She spoke in a flat, toneless voice. Something within her seemed to keep saying, "I didn't know I cared so much. If this had happened before, I would never have left him, and now it is too late even to tell him." Without being conscious of it, she spoke the words aloud.

Maisie Cruthers crossed to her quickly.

"Why did you leave him?" she asked. "He loves you madly. He will always love you." There was a note almost of bitterness in her voice. She sank into a chair opposite Lynette. "And now he's dying, Lynette, and it was to save me! Oh, Lynette, I wasn't worth it!" She dropped her head in her hands. "Oh, I can't bear it!" she said through her tears.

Lynette did not speak at first. Her thoughts were far away in the early days of her marriage.

"And what of me?" she asked at last.

Maisie looked up and understood. Without a word, she put out her hand and clasped Lynette's. So they sat through the long afternoon, while the doctors did their gruesome work upstairs.

CHAPTER X.

For two days, Cyril Royden's life hung in the balance. On the third day, old Doctor Leopold, patting Lynette's hand, told her that the patient was out of danger.

The knowledge that he would recover brought a change over two members of the household. After that first day, Maisie and Lynette exchanged no more confidences. Instead, there came almost a coldness between them. In a way, it seemed that each dreaded what the other knew. Maisie, waiting only to make sure of Cyril's condition, found that she had other visits to make and ordered her trunks packed.

Lynette appeared quiet and preoccupied. If the truth were known, she had begun to experience a new feeling of tenderness toward her former husband, a tenderness born of that long afternoon when she had sat and waited for the doctors' verdict, when her thoughts had gone back to Cyril gay and active, unlike that still, white figure upstairs. But it was a tenderness that had in it no place for the woman who had then waited with her. She saw Maisie leave with relief, and then busied herself in doing little kindnesses for Cyril, and watching over his recovery with loving interest.

She did not analyze it to herself, but it was a different emotion from any that she had felt before.

So the days slipped by, and Cyril, in spite of the gravity of his injuries, made a surprisingly rapid recovery. At last

he was looking forward to going downstairs.

It was then that Lynette's pent-up energies demanded an outlet in action, and she announced her intention of giving a ball.

"It's all in your honor," she laughingly assured Cyril, "so you shouldn't even think of leaving before it comes off." For he had begun to talk of leaving.

He had become immensely popular since his accident, and the other guests added their protestations to his hosts'. In the light of all the kindness he had received, he could not gracefully refuse. Yet, in spite of it, he was unhappy. For with the return of his strength, came also the realization that Lynette Van Vliet meant more to him than she had ever done. It had been her face that he had first seen on recovering consciousness, and it was she who was most often beside him. Or not she, but rather a new Lynette, loving and tender and eager to serve him. He had been happy in those last few weeks just to have her near him, but lately he had begun to fear. He had to remind himself again and again that he was Billy's guest, that she was Billy's wife. He began to have a horrible doubt of his ability to keep silent.

Then came the ball. Lynette had explained that it was just for the neighbors and a few men up from town. As a matter of fact, it was an entertainment on a very large scale, Lynette's first attempt to take the place that was her due as Billy's wife and chatelaine of the Hall.

A large tent had been erected on the lawn near the house, and the decorations, which had been designed by the famous artist, Henry Jacobus, represented an Hawaiian scene with a mingling of the Oriental. There were professional dancers up from town, and two large orchestras, one in the house and one in the tent.

The night of the ball, Lynette was radiant. The weather was perfect, and the Hawaiian dancers made a great hit. The decorations were superb. Jacobus had outdone himself, perhaps because Lynette had smiled so sweetly upon him. Lynette had a way of getting what she wanted, and, besides, she had watched over things and given her personal attention to details more than any one guessed.

To-night thousands of lights glittered on the lawns, and the weird, erotic music broke the air into little ripples of sound. Judged by the usual standards, the ball was a great success. There had been a lavish outpouring of wine, and as a result, a number of young men had already been quietly removed by discreet servants.

Cyril felt hot; he was eager for a cool breath of air. But the lawns were full of dancing couples and the racket in the tent was unendurable. He sought the comparative quiet of the conservatory.

It was there that Lynette, stealing a moment from her guests, came upon him. She sank down a little wearily beside him, and they were silent, listening to the music. The plaintive strains of the ukuleles reached them. He glanced at her. Her eyes were closed, and she looked very tired. A great wave of tenderness came over him. He longed to take her in his arms, to rest the tired head on his shoulder.

A new note came into the music outside. It was the muffled, rhythmic beat of the tom-toms, and a wave of piercingly sweet perfume floated in to them. He felt his love grip at his throat. There came a great, an almost irresistible desire to drag her to him, to hold her fast, but he fought it down. Again he reminded himself that it was Billy's house and Billy's wife. But the desire grew stronger and stronger.

She had opened her eyes and was

watching him with a slow smile on her lips. His own were white and drawn.

"What's the use? What's the use?" the tom-toms seemed to say, and his pulses throbbed back as if it were a refrain: "What's the use?"

"You love her," wailed the ukuleles. There was a luring witchery in the sound. "I love her," answered his heart.

His arms went toward her blindly. With a great effort, he pulled them back. The pain in his face was unbearable. She saw the look and the pitiful little gesture, and in a flash Gerald Vandergrief's words came back to her—"Do a decent thing for once in your life." She caught her breath, and her eyes glittered with a sudden resolve.

She leaned toward him suddenly, and her right arm stole gently around his neck. She saw him struggle against the desire to crush her to him. She hesitated a moment. Dare she try it? Did she really know her man?

"It's the only way," she said to herself.

So she leaned closer to him and whispered softly.

"Billy will never know," she said. "Billy is stupid. We can manage it."

Then she saw what she had waited for—saw him start and break from her embrace. She knew now that she had judged him rightly—knew it by the scorn in his eyes, in the curl of his lip, in the gesture with which he flung her arms from him. She had set him free at last! She had killed his love! He rushed past her out of the house, out into the night.

The dawn was just breaking over the hills. Faint pink lines showed in the sky. A fresh breeze struck his forehead. He walked away from the house, and the chirping of birds took the place of the erotic music. It was as if he had awakened from a bad dream. And with the soft morning wind came a great sense of peace. He was free at

last! He was his own man again! Wounded, bruised, and sore, it is true, but—his own man!

CHAPTER XI.

It was a month later that, walking up the Avenue late one afternoon, he met Gerald Vandergrief and Maisie Cruthers. Gerald accosted him:

"I say, Royden, where are you bound for? Come along with us to the Plaza. We're stopping there for a bit of tea."

The proposition suddenly seemed to Cyril the most delightful one he had ever heard.

It was over their tea and cocktails that Gerald said suddenly:

"We've been seeing the Van Vliets off. Lynette took a sudden fancy to go to South America, much to Billy's distress. I'm following them in a week or so," he added.

Cyril said nothing, but he heard the name without a quiver. Lynette seemed suddenly to matter very little.

"If you don't mind seeing Maisie home, I'll run along now," pursued Gerald. "I've just remembered an appointment with my tailor."

Royden saw him leave with a little flutter of excitement.

They lingered over their tea cakes a long time. Coming out, Maisie declined a taxi, and they strolled down the Avenue in the deepening dusk. Neither was in a hurry to reach the side street where Maisie lived, but at last they stood before her door.

He stammered out a boyish request that he might call. She smiled and held out her hand to him.

"I'll be at home to you when every one else is turned away," she said lightly, and added, "I haven't forgotten what you did for me last summer—what you suffered."

Her voice trembled a little. Cyril felt suddenly very light and happy.

In a private drawing-room in a hotel in Buenos Aires, Gerald Vandergrief was telling the American news to Lynette Van Vliet—among other items, the newly announced engagement of Cyril Royden and Maisie Cruthers. Lynette took it very calmly.

"And you say you planned it all up at our place, Jerry, and it turned out just as you wished?"

"Right-o!" said Gerald. "Oh, I'm

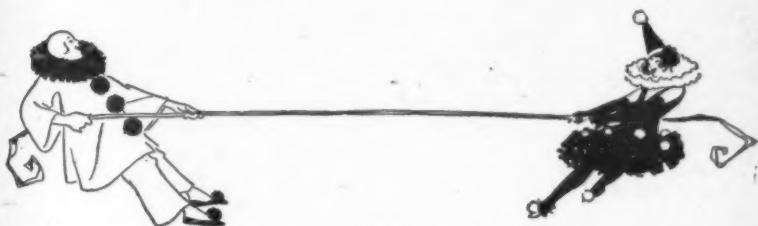
rather clever at managing these little affairs, Lynette!"

"So it was all your doing," said Lynette reflectively.

Gerald shrugged.

"Of course there was a chance of its happening anyway," he admitted modestly, "but still I rather feel that, after all, I was the god in the machine."

In the shadow of the curtain, Lynette Van Vliet smiled mysteriously.



THE DIVORCEE

YOU did me dark and bitter wrong
With falsehood and deceit;
But, oh, your arms were round and strong,
And, oh, your lips were sweet!

You broke your vows without regret,
Unfaithful through and through,
But never shall my heart forget
The lure and charm of you.

And though I sought and won release
From ties you held too light,
My empty arms shall never cease
To grope for you at night.

You've gone as blithely as you came,
And why should I be harsh?
For who shall bind the dancing flame
That flickers o'er a marsh?

My life is like a broken song
Crushed underneath your feet,
But, oh, your arms were round and strong
And, oh, your lips were sweet!

BERTON BRALEY.



Mademoiselle Rahab

By Charles Saxby

Author of "The Temple Girl," "The Mancac," etc.

IT was, according to the new calendar of these days, in the second year of the war that Cavan went to Tadjour; that same Rock of Tadjour which, spread out like a tawny leopard between the twin austerities of sky and sea, guards the southern gate of the East, even as the Rock of Gibraltar stands grimly across its northern gate, and with the same flag flying over both.

It is a place in itself, a kaleidoscope of raw color, like some rather unbelievable moving picture set to noise and projected on the blue airs of the Yemen by the magic of its pitiless sun—not a tree, not a blade of grass in all its delusive desert coloring of copper, rose, and violet; a ring of hills, barren and twisted, culminating in the Rock, whose spurs seem trying to elbow the town off into the sea; stacks of houses, square and white as heaped-up cubes of sugar; a swarm of people, sending up their clamor in the face of the unbearable sky, heedless of that distant, thunderous muttering drifting in from beyond the hills of the Hedjuff.

Even after weeks, Cavan found himself hardly able to credit it, moving among it all with the apartness of one who has not yet made his place in a strange land, and with one insistent question growing in his mind—a question that he knew he must not ask.

It would come to him suddenly in the silence of his bungalow as he looked out over Tadjour and listened to that

distant muttering sounding more loudly through the night. Or it would spring up amid the riot of the bazaars or in the shadowy peace of the shop of old Menahem ben Nouna.

It was there that Cavan did most of his business, alternately chafing against or falling into the leisurely ways of Oriental commerce. Almost every day he was there, a slight young fellow, with a deceiving habit of draping himself across the nearest piece of furniture, as if too weary to make a move unless to tease the ears of his inseparable fox terrier.

He liked that shop of Ben Nouna—an arched niche in the wall near the Maskat Gate, its amber gloom filled with the bubble of hookahs or the scent of Basran cigarettes, with a glint of tawny silks, of gold-woven scarfs from Bagdad and piles of Teherani rugs, glowing with deep colors as of uncut jewels. And he liked Ben Nouna himself, squatted on his carpet on the brick divan, his white robe mellowed to the tint of old ivory, a red tarboosh pushed back from his hairless skull, his eyes bland and uncommunicative as insets of brown agate, his nodding profile like that of some aristocratic bird of prey.

Since he had to do business at all, Cavan was glad that he was permitted to do it with Ben Nouna; so many things seemed forbidden in Tadjour. Secretly he was a little ashamed of his business just then. It seemed rather a

futile occupation to be scouring the Orient for jewels, silks, rugs, and gauds with which to tempt money-mad New York, flushed with spending the profits of its war babies. He had thought it romantic at first, this free-lancing across the map from port to port spread out in painted strangeness under the stranger skies. But in Tadjour he was learning something of the discount at which Americans were held in those days of silence following the *Lusitania* tragedy. He met it everywhere—at the government offices, in the streets, at the club, reading it in the coolly appraising glances of khaki-clad men.

He was learning, too, something of the enormousness of that world struggle. He had been accustomed to think of "the front" as localized on the plains of France and Flanders, but here it was, halfway to the equator. That was no thunder out there beyond the copper rim of the hills, but the growl of war itself—the Tadjour front, unnoticed by the papers, submerged in the vast rush of the war news, but none the less grimly actual; a front of waterless ravines and blustering sands, stemming the southernmost thrust of the German-commanded Turkish armies grasping after this key to the waters of the East.

It was of Ben Nouna that he asked that question one day, as he watched the mob jostling endlessly past the open arch of the shop—bare limbs and backs or travesties of European attire, vociferous Greeks elbowing Abyssinian tribesmen; naked Benadir fishermen and bundled-up women of the harem; Jewesses in huge wigs; Chinese, yellow and slinking; Asia, Africa, and all the chemical mixtures of that age-old melting pot of the Levant seething together in a human stew.

"How the dickens do they keep it all sorted out?" Cavan demanded impulsively.

He stopped, noting the smile that curved above the stem of Ben Nouna's

hookah at that question which he had no business to ask. But Ben Nouna was safe, he knew; it had even been hinted to him that the old Arab was to some extent in the confidence of the military government which held Tadjour in its watchful grip.

"I wasn't asking for information," he hastened to add. "I was just wondering. All this boiling pot of races and tongues, most of them akin to the Turks—however do they keep tabs on it?"

"What matter if the wine seethes in the bottles so long as the cork holds tight?" asked Ben Nouna. "There is nothing can get through the British lines, praised be God."

They were alone just then; it was one of the rare times when Cavan had Ben Nouna to himself. Usually there was a row of slippers before the divan and on it another row of white-robed elders, nodding gravely over water pipes and chessboards, uttering sententious Orientalisms with much careful praise of both Prophet and British.

"The lines may be tight, but all the same—there's a leak," Cavan shot at him.

"So? I had not heard of that."

Above his pipe, the eyes of Ben Nouna were as placidly impenetrable as ever. Cavan's hand felt instinctively for the comforting ears of his terrier, then drew back in bafflement. Bones had disappeared a week since, swallowed up under the brilliant, shifting surface of the town. The loss had left Cavan more lonely than ever. He had almost ceased to go to the club, and Bones, with his cocked ears, his sharp eyes and grinning mouth, had at least been something to talk at in those interminable nights of sweating solitude. His irritation sharpened his tone as he spoke, flinging himself against Ben Nouna's composure. If he could but once get under the skin of the place! Even a quarrel would be better than

this courteous aloofness which kept him so at arm's length.

"Then you are the only one in the town who hasn't heard of it!" he retorted. "Even in the streets, they talk of it."

"Bah! Gossip of the bazaar! Buzz—buzz—buzz," Ben Nouna droned, with faint sarcasm. "The buzz of the wild bees on the Rock!"

"Bees can sting as well as buzz," said Cavan tersely.

The old man's pretense of ignorance irritated him afresh. Little as he knew himself, he at least knew that something had happened in the night just passed, and that Ben Nouna must know of it, too. Something out there, beyond that glimpse, through the open Maskat Gate, of the baking plains of Khansaar swept by whirling dust devils.

"Then how about that regiment of Ghurkas and their white officers, all blown to bits last night in the Khud al Sanjoi?"

"The will of God, effendi, and the fortunes of war. In a little while, by God's grace, it will be our turn."

"But it was a surprise attack they were making," Cavan persisted. "A surprise planned and kept secret, and yet it was known to the other side, for they were lying in wait for them."

Cavan rose, pacing about with an irrepressible shiver.

"I hate to think of it! Little Bar-rington was among them. He spoke to me one night at the club—about the only one who ever did so—and now—"

"War is war, but God is over all," murmured Ben Nouna. "Come, I will show you some pearls that will make you forget it all—pearls of a price. They came but yesterday by felucca from the Carnatic coast. Casimir of Goa sent them to me himself. You know of him?"

"Pearls!" Cavan exclaimed in dis-

gust. "And out there, in that rotten Khud——"

He stopped again, quivering with red anger as he caught an imaginative flash of that torn ravine with its terrible mess of red pottage and the unclean hawks wheeling above. It would not have been so bad if he could have had the sustaining excitement of somehow being in it all; it was this enforced standing by as a mere spectator that was so hard.

"The effendi is lonely. That is why he feels things so," Ben Nouna nodded. "He should get him a companion worthy of him."

"You mean a woman?"

"What else?"

Cavan stared at him, not in condemnation, but with a sudden realization of how little he knew of the lives of these people. That Menahem ben Nouna, the merchant, was known from Suez to Bombay, that he sat all day in this hole in the wall of a shop, he knew. But of Menahem ben Nouna the man, he knew no more than of one of those Arabic pages of the Koran lying on the divan there, closed against him with all the hermetic seals of another tongue and another scheme of life.

That was Ben Nouna's house, somewhere behind and above this shuttered niche, but who—or what—it contained, or which of those upper slits of windows, or of those tiers of flat roofs, belonged to it, probably none but its owner could really tell. The faces of these street-long masses of masonry were as uncommunicative as the eyes of their dwellers.

The occasional sounds of women's voices behind the heavy door at the back of the shop—that was all Cavan knew; an infrequent tinkle of tones, plaintive, angry, or gay. Once a voice had lifted, with a different intonation, in an air that sounded strangely familiar. And once, that very morning, just a few minutes ago, a voice had been

raised in a wail of dismay, as at the loss of something treasured. Coming through that door which would never open to him, those voices reminded him of those of actors coming through the still-lowered curtain which shuts out all hints of the play to come. And always, at their sound, old Ben Nouna's eyes grew more unseeing than ever, with that utter ignoring, by the masculine East, of its feminine affairs.

Who were they, those closed-in women behind that door? Did they peer and listen through the brass-bound keyhole, eager for drippings from the world outside? He wished the curtain would lift, if only for an instant, for he felt that there must be a drama behind it. But it never would; that was just what made Tadjour so baffling, with its real life closed against him. For the moment, he saw it as a tawny monster of surface, impenetrable as a stone sphinx, all riddle and no answer. With a shock of surprise, he realized that it was only through women that one ever came into touch with the real life of any place.

"A woman?" he asked again doubtfully.

"The good God never made man to dwell alone. It could be arranged."

"No doubt. I should imagine one could arrange anything here. That's just it. I've seen enough of the East to know that, for a white man, those establishments are the first step—and the last, too. It only needs one."

"As the effendi wishes. And the pearls?"

"I'll see them another day," said Cavan, starting for the archway. "May the light of Heaven shine upon your household."

"May God shield the effendi from the curse of loneliness."

"I'm getting pretty well accustomed to that," smiled Cavan, as he stepped into the flame of heat upon the street. "Even my dog——"

He stopped short, as there came a shrill bark and the scattering of a knot of barelegged camel men from something that shot white and bulletlike between their shins. The next moment Cavan was whelmed in a sort of upspringing avalanche of sheer dog, hot, dusty, with clinging paws and licking tongue amid a crescendo of ecstatic yelps. He sank back again upon the divan, grasping the quivering bundle.

"Why, Bones—you've come back?" he cried, half doubting; and the terrier, in every mode of dog affection, proved that it was so.

"Here—no kisses, thank you. Get down and get some of that out of your system. Let's see if you've forgotten your tricks. Can you still do a back somersault? Now then—over!"

Wild with delight at the familiar command, the terrier displayed his accomplishments; then crept more quietly to the crook of his master's arm.

"Oh, Bones, I never thought you'd leave me like that," chided Cavan. Then, as the ears drooped at his tone, he reassured: "All right. I know you never did it of your own accord. I wonder where you've been."

"He was, perhaps, stolen," suggested Ben Nouna, beaming over his pipe in tolerant amusement at the scene.

"Who would steal a dog in a place like this?" asked Cavan. "I thought the followers of the Prophet considered them unclean."

"Unclean they are," replied the Arab dryly. "But this one has tricks. Perhaps some woman saw and desired it as a plaything."

"You mean a lady of some harem?" "I know of none such as you speak of," replied Ben Nouna, staring unseeingly at him. "It might have been the woman of some Jew."

"Well, whoever she is, Bones will keep her secret well. He will be a perfect gentleman in that respect, won't

you, Bones? I'm glad she didn't take a fancy to your collar. I don't know where I'd get you another one in this place——"

He stopped, as his fingers, grasping the collar, encountered something thrust beneath it—a paper of some kind, folded and tucked between the thicknesses of the leather. A roughness told him that some of the stitches had been loosed to make a place for it.

His hand rigid with excitement, Cavan was about to draw it out when a sudden instinct of caution came to him. After all, what did he know of Ben Nouna—of this place, or of anything in it? He was just wandering in Tadjour in a sort of trance of noncomprehension, as unaware of its possible dangers as of its possible romance. If that were really a paper under his fingers, then he was about to find out something, for it had certainly not been there when Bones had disappeared from his side one day in the bazaar, and the care with which it had been concealed proved its presence to be no accident.

He rose, tucking the terrier under his arm, keeping his grasp upon the collar.

"I should thank you, Ben Nouna," he said, with a whimsical smile. "You wished me no more loneliness, and behold—Bones returns!"

"Sometimes the Prophet, by God's grace, answers the prayers of the faithful."

Back in the privacy of his baking cube of masonry on a spur of the Rock, Cavan drew out the mysterious missive and spread it before him. It was a piece torn from a sheet of pink note paper, of a kind specially put up for Oriental trade, thick, gold edged, reeking of perfume; and on it was written in French, with gold ink and in an unformed, woman's hand:

Go to Monsieur le Gouverneur Militaire and tell him that the Khud al Sanjoi is ambushed.

II.

The day passed on in swift flame, the tongue of land glowing like hot iron between sea and sky, but Cavan still sat, gazing questioningly from the outspread warning to the attentive terrier.

"Oh, Bones," he cried, "if you could but tell where you've been!"

He turned again to the paper, pinkly luscious, with its gold ink and reek of perfume. Horrible taste, but somehow it fitted the place. It fitted also Cavan's ideas of a harem, those mistaken, but persistent ideas of a sort of hidden riot of luxury and secret women that spring in Western minds at the sound of that word.

But French in a Tadjour harem? In Tunis, in Tangier, even in Constantinople, he could have understood it, but here on the verge of the Indian Ocean, it seemed impossible.

He wondered if he should take it to the military governor. But the warning had come too late, and he might be merely laying himself open to suspicion.

Then, again, he had a curious reluctance to part with it. Mere scrap of paper that it was, it had come up mysteriously, through the uncommunicative medium of Bones, from that brilliant mess of a city down below. It was a link with all that life from which he was shut out. Like a rift in a looking-glass, it gave a hint of what might be back of its baffling reflection. Locking the paper carefully away from the eyes of his Zanzibari servants, Cavan looked down on Tadjour, hard and sharp as painted cast iron against the darkening sea. There was no veiling of mystery in the desert air, but he knew now that there was at least something back of all that apparent revealing; and even this glint of knowledge had been cast up to him by the hand of an unknown woman.

"I'll have to lose you again, Bones,"

he said to the attentive terrier. "You are my only hope, so please get stolen again as soon as you can."

It was the merest chance, of course, but since Bones had been the chosen medium once, he might be again. Drawing a sheet of paper to him, Cavan, blessing his year in Paris, wrote:

Your warning came too late. May I not see you? Do you need help? Can I not come to you?

That done, he stitched it carefully into the collar, ruefully questioning the brown dog's eyes turned up to his. What had those eyes seen? What could Bones tell, had he but speech? But Bones would keep her secret well.

A week passed in that quick monotony of sun and night. With the terrier at his heels, Cavan tramped the crowded bazaar, the streets of blank walls that climbed up to end abruptly against the barren spurs of the Rock. In all the narrow limits that, as an alien, he was permitted to traverse, he went, but always Bones returned with him.

Then suddenly one day, almost in the sacred shadow of the club itself, Bones disappeared. He was gone—that was all—and Cavan saw how impossible it would be to trace him amid that throng. Burnooses or bare limbs, soiled shirt fronts, veils and haiks, a welter of eyes, a babel of voices smiting his ears with confusion, but no betraying yelp of protest from under one of those flowing draperies. There was nothing to do but wait.

Much of that waiting he passed in Ben Nouna's shop. Since it was there that Bones had returned to him before, it might happen there again. He laughed about it to the old merchant, reclining on the divan by the side of that figure of immobile peace.

"Will you not wish me no more loneliness again, O Ben Nouna?" he asked. "Your prayer must have worn itself out, for, behold, my dog is gone!"

"It is the will of God, effendi." Ben Nouna nodded gravely. "Now then, as to those pearls?"

But Cavan, in a fit of whimsical obstinacy, refused even to look at them, spread out though they were in the Arab's parchment palm.

"When Bones returns to me, then I will buy your pearls."

"Does, then, the effendi think that I have taken his dog?" asked Ben Nouna, his eyes suddenly hard and bright.

"You mean that you are too faithful a follower of the Prophet to traffic with unclean beasts."

"It is undoubtedly some woman who has the dog."

"Yes, I know that," said Cavan incautiously.

"By what revealing?"

The tone was casual, falling lightly on the ears, but Cavan grew suddenly wary. The woman in the affair, unknown though she was, changed things so. His gaze full on the other's, he smiled lazily.

"Even because you told me so, O sage."

Cavan gathered himself up to go, lingeringly surveying the place. That niche in the wall, with its glints of gold and color coming through the deep blue shadows of the morning; that white-robed figure cross-legged on the divan; that impassable door, tantalizingly closed on whatever might be behind it, struck him with a sense as of having wandered into some vivid, "Arabian Nights" dream.

"I have faith in your prayers, O Ben Nouna," he laughed, half in mockery, half in a queer kind of earnestness. "So I will say this: The day that Bones returns to me, I will buy your pearls. So perhaps you will pray for me again."

It was all a whim, a mere fantastic playing with the fantastic life all about him. He had forgotten it when, some three days later, he was again whelmed

in Bones' irrepressible greeting; in the night this time, as he lay on his cot trying to snatch some sleep in the desiccating heat that seemed to fill nose and throat with a dry powder. A patter of paws, a shrill bark, and Bones was upon him.

The collar—that was the first thing. With a gasp of relief, Cavan felt that the stitches had been loosed again. Once more the pink paper, the now familiar perfume. He read the message by the moonlight sifting through the grass blinds:

Monsieur, the dog will come no more here for—

Cavan stared incredulously as his eyes encountered the next phrase:

Car de tout ça mon aïf l'a poché les yeux du beurre noir.

He wondered again at that phrase of the streets, coming suddenly up from the very sands of the Yemen. The woman was undoubtedly French; no foreigner would have written that.

So we must find some other way. If you will come at ten o'clock on the night of the full moon to the third green door at the bend of the Sook al Djemal, I may be able to speak with you.

In a flame of eager wakefulness, Cavan looked down on Tadjour. In the bay below, transports were landing troops amid a glare of searchlights. Something was going on out there beyond the hard rim of the hills; he could trace the flare of the guns toward Khansaar, could hear the toot and rattle of the narrow-gauge trains puffing out with their loads of potential death. Something was going on, some new act in the grim drama of the struggle for the possession of those coal stacks on Steamer Point and the keys of the Red Sea.

And down there was this unknown woman, a Frenchwoman, one who wrote the slang of the Paris streets, hidden among those piled-up cubes of the city under the lee of the Rock.

The full moon was three nights away, but somehow Cavan dragged through them. There was a Mohammedan wedding that night, and the whole place resounded with its din. He could trace its course by the glare of its torches on the topmost cornices, thankful that its attractions left the other streets deserted. With careful casualness, he had already explored the Sook al Djemal and he knew that green, nail-studded door set in the jutting thickness of the wall.

Cautiously he crept along, once flattening himself in a niche, melting the glimmer of his white clothes into that of the whitewash, to escape the notice of a military patrol passing at a distance. There was an added sultriness in the air; the sky was full of towering, rainless clouds; a flicker of dry lightning mingled with the moonlight. The street was a pit of hot gloom, and the sweat of excitement dripped from Cavan's fingers as he knocked. For the first time he was to pass one of those closed doors, to penetrate that mockery of sheer surface. The green door yielded at his tap, swinging noiselessly back, and a hand grasped his sleeve and drew him in.

"C'est vous?"

Just a voice, as yet—a whisper in the darkness that followed the closing of the door behind them; a whisper with a certain husky sweetness in it, a sense of perfume, and a warm, feminine vitality filling the narrow confines of the gateway.

"Is it safe?" breathed Cavan.

"C'est à graisser nos bottes."

Cavan wondered again as the Montmartrois slang came through that Arabian darkness.

"It is for you I am afraid."

"One must take a chance, mon Chopin."

She drew him forward into a sort of triangular well in the mass of masonry. It went straight up, roofed, apparently,

by the glare of lightning-shot cloud. There were hints of arched galleries above, a pavement of red-and-white squares under foot; evidently a house of wealth.

"The old man is out, and all the other girls have gone to the wedding. The servants have all gone, too, for I gave them the chance. As for the kavass at the gate, I put a few drops of chloral in his coffee, and he will not wake yet."

He could see her now in the blue flicker of the sky—a slender, yellow-haired figure. Her face was veiled, but her white gown was of European fashion. Noting Cavan's glance, she replied to it:

"I always wear these things. My old man likes to be reminded that he has a Feringi wife."

"You are his wife?" Cavan asked.

There was a pause, a shrug, a spreading of the hands.

"In a way. I met him in Tunis when I was dancing there in a *café Maure*."

Cavan understood now, remembering the curious French disregard of racial lines. He had heard of such cases, where Frenchwomen had been found in Oriental establishments.

"May I not see your face?" he pleaded.

She pushed aside the veil, revealing an odd little face, such as can be seen by the score on the boulevards, almost transparent in its delicacy under the mass of blond hair, replete with that charm which seems inseparable from Gallic women, pathetically young, yet stamped with an impudent knowledge that was of the ages. She had disdained the heavy paint of the usual Arab wife, and her skin shone with a pallor that increased the size of her eyes, a gray-green gleam under her bright curls.

"There! I look a fright, I know, but then what would you, after four years of this? *Mon Dieu*—how it bores one!"

"You wish to escape?" suggested

Cavan eagerly, but she faced him in rather puzzled question.

"Escape—from what? Oh—*c'est pas si mal*. I have known worse."

Cavan faltered, caught in a web of vague ideas. He had thought that of course she would wish to escape, given the chance. Something about Christianity, plural marriages, and the horrors of a harem flashed into his mind, but it all seemed a little flat in the face of her matter-of-fact acceptance of things. She evidently suspected what he did not say, for her mouth curved in a grin of sheer *gaminerie*.

"Bah—you make me think of an Englishwoman who came here once on a zenana mission! *Une vraie grenadière*—all teeth and feet! But the old man is kind to me, and the other girls not so bad. It is only of late that I have been forbidden even to go into the bazaar. That is since the siege began—and all the other things."

The siege! In his groping after romantic possibilities, Cavan had almost forgotten that, but now it came flooding back as a roll of sound filled the court. It might have been thunder or the growl of the guns across the Hedjuff.

"You have something more to tell me?"

"Yes. I have seen you passing in the street, so I had old Yusuf steal your dog. I thought I could let him go and he would run to you again, and that I could get word to you that way."

"The word came too late."

"I know. But I couldn't get the dog to the gate any sooner. You don't know what this place is, with the girls always about—just eyes, eyes, eyes. You can't think how they watch everything, these poor creatures all shut in by themselves."

Cavan could feel it. Everywhere were traces of their occupancy; even in the empty silence of the dark, they

filled the place as with an actual presence.

"That is why I took this risk of having you come here to-night, so that it might not be too late again. Listen to me."

She leaned closer, lowering her whisper to a mere thread, so close that the familiar perfume of the notes wrapped him about in a cloud of delicate suggestions that were in strange contrast to the import of her words.

"Listen! They have been here again, those men from the other side. I know them, for all their disguise of Arabs. There is something going on, my friend."

Cavan had known it all day. The choking atmosphere that filled Tadjour was not all dry monsoon; some of it was the tenseness of a great effort, some of it an unspoken fear. He had not needed the roll of the artillery beyond the hills to tell him that there would be fresh gaps, to-morrow, in those rows of familiar faces at the club; gaps that would be filled by others, coming from the ends of the earth in the ships of the queen of the seas.

"They have been here twice," the girl went on, "and I have listened as they talked with the master—listened as I leaned over my balcony up there, sometimes singing a little in French. That amused them, I knew, to hear that—a Frenchwoman in a harem—and when men are amused that way, they are less careful. A Frenchwoman in a harem, and in this harem of all, singing thoughtlessly while they planned things down here, behind the British lines and in the very heart of the city. How glad I was that I had never told the old man that I understand a little German!"

"Germans!" cried Cavan, aghast. "You say there have been Germans—here—in Tadjour?"

"What else am I telling you all this

time?" she responded impatiently. "They come all painted brown and dressed as tribesmen of the Yemen. They deceived even me as I saw them first, peeping through my grille up there."

"But how do they get through the lines?"

"If you will but wait until I can say it! They come by way of the old passages of the water tanks."

The water tanks! Cavan had heard of them, though he had never seen them, since they lay beyond the confines of his permitted wanderings. Even from the dimness of his school days, he seemed to remember having heard of those water tanks of Tadjour, carved in the desert hills, vast as Egyptian temples and as old.

"But surely they are guarded," he protested.

"Guarded, of course, but—ah, *ces Anglais!* It is so hard to drive an idea from their heads! They think the tanks are safe because they always have been. Guarded—oah, yess! But not enough. Listen, for I have heard it from my balcony, humming 'La Marseillaise'—to make them laugh!—and all the time with my ears as it were on strings let down into the court here. Bubble, bubble of the water pipes—how I hated them for bubbling so loud!—and bubble, bubble of German. And sometimes one of the girls would call to me, and I must answer—oh, so lazily, so sweetly!—and so lose what was going on down here.

"But it was years ago—ten, maybe—that there came here one savant from Heidelberg. He came to explore the tanks and find out all about who built them so long ago. He was very learned, very famous, it seems, so they entertained him in the house of the governor and let him go everywhere. But all the time he was making maps of the secret ways under the tanks, some of them unknown even to the

British, and he sent them all back to Berlin to be used against this day."

Like a cold hand deep down in him, Cavan felt a chill as he realized that deadly, almost inhuman sort of preparedness that had reached out, even ten years before, to this uttermost part of the earth.

Breathlessly the girl leaned toward him, speaking aloud in her excitement.

"Quick! Go to Monsieur the Governor and tell him that the tanks are mined!"

"Mined!"

Cavan's incautious cry filled the court, and the girl's hand grasped his wrist in warning. His brain whizzed like an uncoiled spring, spinning pictures. With the tanks gone, Tadjour would be untenable; a day would suffice to transform it into a hell of thirst and madness. And with Tadjour gone, its remnants in Turkish hands, the Red Sea would be a nest of submarines, the gateway of Suez locked fast by their terrible toll in those narrow ways.

"It is to help starve England, they said," the girl went on. "At first I did not care—why should I? But then it came to me, all at once, that to starve England is to starve France also."

"Then you still regard yourself as French?" Cavan asked.

"But yes. Why not?"

Cavan stared in wonder. A life like hers, a little outlaw nomad—but still French! Stung by curiosity, he drew out his pocket flash, and under its beam her face sprang from the surrounding gloom—a face strangely still under the surface play of its quick charm, the eyes meeting his without either concealment or frankness, but rather with a complete acceptance of things. With one of her irrepressible jeers, she dropped him a curtsy.

"Well—are you satisfied, Monsieur Madame-de-la-mission-zenane?"

Flushing, Cavan released the spring of the torch, and the darkness rushed

on them again. As if it brought with it an added sense of their situation, she caught at his shoulders in vehement command.

"Go now, while there is yet time! Go to the governor and tell him to search under the tanks until he finds the mines and the hidden passage that leads out into the Khor Khandia."

"I shall have to betray—your husband," said Cavan.

"What of that? Did you think that I love him?"

"Then why do you stay?"

"Because to stay is meat and drink and bed and roof to me, and I have too often been without all those; that is why," she replied. "Ah, you *Americains! Toujours la moralité!* And yet, when you come to Paris, you are the worst of all! Though I had a thousand husbands, yet have I but one love, and that is my France. All else—bah! Now go!"

Her hands on his shoulders, she propelled him to the gate. Even in the shock of her news, Cavan found himself wondering at the woman herself. One love—her France—and yet she lived, seemingly without regrets, just the sort of life that had made that country at once a mingled joke and byword of the nations. Just such women as she— And yet— Her hands cut him short, tightening their grip on him, digging into his flesh with a spasm of fear. He could feel it streaming from her in a cold emanation of sheer panic as, from the street outside, came the sound of footsteps.

There was a knock on the door—just a light tap, unhurried, authoritative; he could almost see the knocker without waiting calmly in his absolute assurance of immediate admittance. A light tap on a door, but it sounded in Cavan's ears just then more threateningly than those mingled artilleries of sky and earth rolling on the night.

"It is the master!" she moaned.

Cavan turned in the darkness of the arch, grasping her arms, his words a mere stream of soundless breath.

"What shall we do?"

She drew him back behind a pillar of the court. Even in the darkness, he could see her added pallor, the brilliance of her eyes, seemingly turned inward in concentration.

"It will be some moments before the kavass wakes— *Nom de Dieu*, hear that knocking!" as a tattoo beat upon the door. "The women's rooms— But there will be no concealment there, once they return. Besides, with the old man back, it might be days before you could pass the gate."

"Is there no other way out?"

"Wait! I am thinking! I have a key. I stole it years ago and made him think that he had dropped it. I don't know why I did it. It amused me—that was all. We have time. Wait here."

She was gone, up the rambling stone stairs. Cavan waited, while the court echoed to the pounding on the door and in a corner the porter began to grunt in dazed awaking.

Then she was back, grasping his hand, drawing him along the wall. There was a door. Even in that moment, a certain irony in the situation struck Cavan. All his desire had been to get in through one of those doors; once in, everything depended on his getting out again. There was an endless pause as she turned the key, while just across the court, the kavass stumbled to his feet, calling on his Prophet in incoherent amazement.

The key had worked, and she pushed him through the opening.

"Quick! Back to your quarters!" Cavan whispered, but she hung there listening, as suddenly the court filled with voices, sharp with anger, humbly protesting.

"It is too late," she murmured and closed the door, shutting herself in with

him in a place of darkness, splashed with a single streak of moonlight, heavy with odors that seemed strangely familiar.

"There are places here where you can hide," she whispered. "Behind the rugs or under the mattings. In the morning, when the shutters are opened, you may be able to dash out."

It was through a chink of those shutters that the moonlight came. Cavan felt them, heavy, iron-bound; without tools, it would take dynamite to move them. Again the odors of the place, heavily Oriental, smote him with a sense of accustomedness.

"Where are we?" he asked softly.

"Don't you know? It is the shop of Menahem ben Nouna."

III.

Ben Nouna! Cavan could hardly credit it, remembering his mornings in that very place—its amber shadows, its langours, the old merchant himself, with his ivory robes, nodding sympathy over the loss of Bones—and Bones all the time behind that door to the hidden court!

Then came other thoughts, recollections of the confidence felt for Ben Nouna by the military government.

"But—if Ben Nouna is an agent of the enemy—how about that regiment of Turks—"

"That was just to gain confidence. It was a regiment from the Caucasus, full of revolt. They were glad to have it destroyed."

As by drops of acid in a chemical solution, Cavan's mind began to clear, settling into a deadly realization of the temper of that foe beyond the hills. If they would treat their own men so, what would they do to Tadjour if once they entered it? He saw the old merchant, beaming mildly on that brick divan there, as some huge spider in the center of an invisible web whose fila-

ments enmeshed the place. Then came a suspicion of the girl.

"But how do you know all these things?" he demanded roughly. "Does Ben Nouna, then, take his harem into his confidence?"

"Can an old man keep anything from a young wife?" she retorted. "No, it is not I," she went on contemptuously. "My day is long over, thank Heaven. But six months ago, he married his fourth wife, a girl of sixteen. They shut their women up, these Mohammedans, but it is the women who win, after all. Sixteen and sixty—and sixteen a woman. Figure to yourself that, my friend," she finished, with one of those outcroppings of the impudence of the street.

"The other women were jealous of her, but I made her my friend. I told her things to please him, and then I laughed at her because he told her nothing. And so, to prove to me that she had power over him—— Do you see?"

So that was how it went among this pent-up femininity behind the blank walls! And this especial woman, with her illusions all burned out by her contact with the world—as she stood with that splash of moonlight full across her face, there was something rather terrible about her, for all her surface of impudence and frail charm.

From the court the voice of Ben Nouna, still rating the sleepy porter, recalled Cavan to the situation. It was so big that he could hardly grasp it for the moment. This girl—and the safety of Tadjour; the whole war itself, for with Tadjour gone and the Red Sea swarming with venomous war sharks, the supplies from half the world would be cut off; then this girl again—— It all seemed to come back to her. That German professor, waddling across the desert, prattling archæology, beaming behind his spectacles at the governor's table in those days of unsuspecting peace, his maps, all that ghastly prepa-

ration of forty years—all, perhaps, about to be set at naught by this bit of French fluff, this bubble from some gutter of Montmartre.

She was at the door now, listening, signing him to come. Her mouth at his ear, she breathed:

"There is some one with him. One of *them*. Look!"

Through the slit of the keyhole, Cavan surveyed the court. A hanging lamp had been lit, one of those cheap affairs of gilt and colored prisms so dear to the Oriental heart. It glowed jewellike in the shadows, casting a circle of yellow light on Ben Nouna, cross-legged on cushions, and another man, seated in a chair—a tribesman from some interior oasis, to all appearances, his tattered burnoose, brown, slippered feet, and dingy turban as Arabian as the old merchant himself. He was evidently suspicious of the porter's sleep and Ben Nouna's tones came in a murmur of pacification.

Cavan cursed his own ignorance of both German and Arabic. The fellow spoke the latter with perfect fluency; trust them not to overlook a detail like that, he thought. Very likely this same man had been one of the assistants of that Heidelberg archæologist, laid away for just this task, even as those maps had been.

Then, from the seated figure, came a tone such as Cavan had never before heard. The ring of command he knew, also the sounds of fear and anger and all the gamut of human utterance, but this full-throated ring of an almost incredible arrogance had never before struck his ears. He knew it on the instant—the voice of the Beast itself, of the Nietzschean Brute—and as he heard it, he understood many things.

The girl had suddenly flung herself down on the divan in a supine abandonment, shaken by a storm of noiseless sobs. Cavan looked at her in disappointment. She had been splendid up

till now, but after all it probably took—well, character—to go through with a thing like this.

Then she sat up again, controlling herself, instinctively pulling her veil across her face to conceal its ravagement. Through the shutters came a gust of noise from the Mohammedan wedding and she nodded toward it, muttering through the chattering of her teeth.

"The bride's procession is starting. It will be over soon, and the women will return. I have thought it all out, and they are our only chance. When they come, Ben Nouna will take that man into one of the rooms until they have passed up the stairs. The court will be full for a moment, and the gate will be open. You must put one of these shawls about you and watch your chance to slip out."

"And you—you must come, too," said Cavan.

"No, I must stay. I know the ways of the house—*ciel*, how well I know them!" she interjected wearily. "I will stay. Perhaps I could make some confusion to help you get out."

"But will you be safe?"

"Safe? Of course not. Did you think I was afraid because I cried just now?" Then suddenly she clung to him in a spasm of sheer terror. "Oh, I am afraid—horribly afraid! But it must be done!"

"And afterward, when it's all over and Ben Nouna in the military prison, then you will be free," whispered Cavan, patting her shoulder in clumsy encouragement.

She drew away from him, looking up at him in what he thought was noncomprehension; then he saw that it was rather with too much knowledge.

"Free—eh? And for what?"

Cavan groped blindly for something to say. After all, what had she to hope for, this girl to whom even a Tadjour harem had been as a haven of refuge?

And yet, after what she was doing, there should surely be some reward. A mad impulse of chivalry rose in him, and he grasped her hands.

"Why not come to me?"

The hands lay in his, but hardly in response; through her veil he could feel her gaze, cold, calculating, then changing to something that he could not fathom—a vast astonishment, he thought, mixed with amusement and a vaster knowledge.

"*Nom d'un pipe—quel aïef il vous avait!* I believe that he would marry me—yes!"

The hands withdrew, and she choked back a laugh that would have been a jeer.

"Oh, you Americans! You are always trying to change us, but we French know better. Have there not always been such as I?"

Cavan stared at her through the dark as if the mere act of seeing might make him understand better. He had always had a notion that women who stepped beyond the pale of things were perpetually horrified at their position, and her complete sanction of herself left him mentally stranded.

"Always such as I," she went on. "For thousands of years. I have read of them in that Bible. That madame of the *mission zenane*, she gave me one, printed in French. She gave it to me that it might make me feel bad, so that I might want to feel good again—but it did not."

Cavan hardly heard, occupied again with the more pressing situation. She complicated things so; but for her, he could have taken a desperate chance of fighting his way out of the court, but to betray his own presence there would be to involve her as well.

"If the patrol would only pass in the street, there, by the Maskat Gate, I might talk to them through the shutters," he suggested.

"The patrol is stupid," she answered,

and Cavan himself quailed at the thought of trying to make some stolid Anzac sergeant understand the import of mysterious whispers coming through the shutters of the shop of the respected Ben Nouna.

"*Que nous voilà fait—hein!*" The girl shrugged. "It is the women who are our best chance."

The women—once again it all seemed to come back to them; somehow everything in the world seemed to begin and end with them.

"We must wait, my friend; that is all."

She pulled him down beside her on the divan, nestling close for comfort, filling him with the sense of her warm presence. She began to talk under her breath, disjointed sentences, hardly audible in the darkness, uttered merely to keep herself from thinking of their danger.

It was of herself that she spoke, words hardly connected, yet strangely revealing, cutting the mists of her past even as the flash of his pocket torch had cut her face from the gloom of the court.

"My mother was a dressmaker—but she had been in the ballet. It was from her I learned to dance. I would practice while she worked. I can hear it now—that '*un—deux—trois—un—deux—trois*' through a mouthful of pins. We lived in the Rue des Bonnes Chrétiennes Réclues. You would not know it. It is just a little street."

Her words wove pictures in Cavan's brain; pictures that formed and then melted again into the persistent picture of those men in the court beyond the door—that little Paris street, gray and mean, full of the mysterious little businesses of such little streets the world over; then the court again, with its jewellike lantern shining on the robed figures planning destruction under the glare of the desert lightning.

He had wanted to know what lay

behind the door there. Well—he knew now.

"My mother was not very good—but then who cared? And I——"

Women's troubles—the sort of story over which the world had wept for years; but the world had been given something real to cry over now. Tadjour—Potsdam—and that little Paris street; "*un—deux—trois*" through a mouthful of pins—and forty years of imperial plotting—Cavan felt his head whirling with a sense of an extraordinary connection between it all.

"They envied me, those other girls in that café at Tunis, when Ben Nouna came to me. An Arab prince with *du l'or à Gogo*—and I to be queen of his harem! No more aching toes; no more—anything. I know better now." She smiled drearily. "But, after all, it has not been so bad, though that poor Englishwoman was so shocked."

If they both stayed concealed there in the shop all night, then, when the porter came to open the shutters in the morning— But she would be missed in the house. Besides, there was no telling when the attack upon the water tanks might come. Perhaps the shutters would not again be opened. The girl talked on:

"She said I was a wicked girl, so she gave me the Bible. But I knew them, those women in it; I knew them far better than she did. That Eve in the garden, wanting to know all about it—that was myself. That mother of the little Moise, setting him adrift on the river to save him—I would have done the same. And that *Madame Rahabe du Jérigo*—who am I but she? It was from her that I got the idea. She had helped; why not I?"

As she spoke, Cavan felt a sort of chasm opening in the back of his mind into which his preconceived ideas of things seemed tumbling. Of course the girl could not be right—everything proved that—and yet life persists in

splashing such raw colors with so broad a brush, irrespective of peoples' ideas about things.

The din of the wedding increased, shattering the silence of the street behind the shutters. The girl rose, quivering.

"The bride is starting for her husband's house, and the women will be back soon with their guards. We must be ready."

Laying his hands on her shoulders, Cavan drew her into the shaft of moonlight.

"You will be safe?"

"No. But then I have never been safe in all my life."

She had never been safe! Somehow all the pity of the world seemed summed up in that sentence. Of course no one was ever really safe, but from most that fact was mercifully hidden; the pity was her frank facing of it.

"Wrap this about you," she said, catching up a Shirazi shawl. "Put it over your head like a burnoose. Now, when the moment comes, go straight to the gate in the Sook al Djemal, before the porter can close it. Stop for nothing."

"But what of you?"

"You must not think of me at all. Think only of the news you carry and what it means. If you are caught, it dies with you, and there will be no other chance."

He drew her to him, reverently kissing her lips.

"You are wonderful!" he murmured, and for a moment she clung to him.

"Thank you. No one ever kissed me like that before." Then she smiled up at him in one of her irrepressible impudences. "Poor *madame de la mission zenane*—she never meant her mission to end in anything like this!"

Cavan could see her, that meddling Englishwoman, with her sincere conviction of her superior virtue; yet she,

also, had her place in this extraordinary pattern of things.

"She did not know what it would do to me, but I knew them, the women of that book. Ah—a great love story—that is what it is."

The girl's hands were on his, and for a moment she glowed with an inner light, the mellow radiance of a cathedral, he thought, shining incongruously through the bedizened front of a cinema theater.

"I knew them all, those women—even that Marie la Madelaine. I, too, could be the same for such as He." She stopped, looking searchingly up at Cavan. "And you who would change me—are you, then, such an One?"

As Cavan's silence answered her, her words came clear and hard:

"Then remember this, my friend: Had I not been just as I am, I should not be here to do this."

She stopped, listening intently at the door; then turned with a flash of witch-fire brilliance.

"Bah, we are so solemn! Listen! The women are at the gate, and Ben Nouna is taking that man away. Be ready! Hush! The porter is opening the gate! Now!"

There was a rush of women's voices from the court, and Cavan, tensely alert, slipped out, draped in his shawl. Women everywhere; the court seemed full of them, brushing him with their haiks, filling the place with perfume and with the sense of eyes behind their veils. Intent on reaching the gate before the porter could turn the key, he pushed them ruthlessly aside, heedless of their cries of dismay, their startled rushes. Then a pair of strangling arms closed about him, and he found himself struggling with Ben Nouna himself.

"Fool—did you think that I did not suspect something?"

The Arab's breath was hot on his cheek; the wiry arms were of a surprising strength. As they swayed back

and forth among the scrambling, screaming women, Cavan saw the German with a revolver in his hand, and he caught again those tones which had so infuriated him—a snarl of arrogant triumph. The kavass was closing in, too, and the infernal regulations of the town had deprived him of every vestige of a weapon.

Only an instant, all of it, he knew; but it hung seemingly interminable. No use to cry for help, his voice would just go up from that stone well and shatter itself against the sky.

On the gallery above, he saw the girl, standing with a flaring glass lamp in her hand. He tried to shout to her to go back, to conceal herself, but remembered in time that above all she must be kept out of it.

With a violent wrench, he flung Ben Nouna against the wall, hearing something crack under the impact. Only the porter now, and the gate was open—

But there was that fellow with his gun. In another moment he would feel the bite of a bullet in his flesh. Who was that screaming—a horrible scream that made even the German glance involuntarily upward? Then, in a gleaming arc, the lamp came crashing down into the courtyard at the German's feet.

The porter was down now; Cavan supposed that he himself must have flung him there. All just an instant, really, but he felt like one in a nightmare clawing his way through throbbing stretches of time. At the fall of the lamp, the terror-stricken women had packed themselves behind him, an

unconscious barrier that shielded him from pursuit.

On the gallery he saw the girl, a white figure outlined by the blaze of the lamp. Her voice came after him above the screams of the women.

"Go—quick! The patrol is passing in the Sook al Djemal!"

There was an answering snarl of fury that must have come from the German; then a shot, magnified a hundred times by the inclosing walls. The girl swayed, clutching at her breast, a crimson stain spreading from under her hand.

Cavan turned, insanely bent on fighting his way to her. As if divining his intention, she waved him toward the gate. For an instant she stood there, swaying, looking down at it all as if in sheer astonishment. Her lips moved, and Cavan waited, everything else seeming trivial beside the import of what she might say—something tremendous, surely; something to ring through the world.

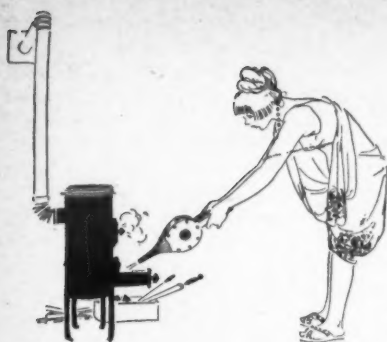
It came, with a last shrug, a last grin of the impudence with which she had faced her life:

"Ah—*zut!*"

It was over, and he was running along the Sook al Djemal, pounding toward the patrol who was hastening in the direction of the shot. His lips were big with his news—news that was to keep Tadjour and the keys to half the oceans of the world.

Forty years of Potsdam plotting and all its inhuman preparations—and that bubble of the gutter in the little Paris street! There is a certain balance in things.





The Mannequin

By Alicia Ramsey

Author of "Eve's Daughter,"
"The King's Chair," etc.

IN the showroom at Fenton's, the famous dressmakers, the great rush of business was over, and they were clearing up toward the end of the day. From ten o'clock in the morning until long past four, there had been a constant succession of customers streaming through the great rooms, and the place was littered all over with pattern books, fashion plates, and the colored illustrations of the new styles that were just coming in for spring.

Fenton's prided themselves, and justly, on their beautiful rooms. They had been pioneers in the revolution which held as its first tenet of faith that beauty could be evolved only in beautiful surroundings, and the great establishment, with its unprecedented prices and its stupendous success, was the result.

The showroom, which had been the talk of New York, was unique. Its octagonal walls, which curved inward up to a domed ceiling, had been designed by a great architect; its scheme of decoration—dazzling white, startlingly allied to lacquered ebony—had been personally superintended by that genius of audacity, Bakst; its draperies of apricot and royal-blue satin were the handiwork of a connoisseur whose combinations of colors had made him the rage of Europe.

The furniture was on a par with the rest of the room. The salerooms of France had been ransacked for the high-backed gilt chairs with their spindle legs; the beauty of dead queens had been reflected in the long mirrors that ran their glittering way from floor to ceiling; the great crystal chandeliers swinging and scintillating from their golden chains, before they had come to Fenton's, had graced the ballroom of a Merovingian king.

As with the room, so with the people whom Fenton's employed. It was said, and with truth, that behind its closed doors some of the most beautiful women in the world could be found. Tall and slender, dark and fair, low-bosomed and swan-necked, their flawless complexions massaged to a peach-like bloom, their perfectly dressed heads burnished and brushed, their dainty nails polished to the transparency of glass, the beautiful mannequins moved noiselessly over the velvet carpets under the shaded lights, less like a dressmaker's models than like Old World priestesses of Venus, tending the altar flames of beauty's shrine.

It is a trite platitude that to every rule there is an exception, but it is true, as most platitudes are. The woman standing in the midst of all that gleaming, shining beauty was neither slight nor tall nor beautiful. On the contrary,

she was stout, below middle height, and plain. How she had come to be employed at all at a place like Fenton's was a mystery. It was whispered in the workrooms that she had some secret claim on the great man; who had installed her in her unique position the first day he had opened his doors. More probably, her advancement had been due to a farsighted policy; she served the double purpose of placating the wounded feelings of homely customers and acting as a foil to the beauty of the other girls. Be that as it may, there she was—the head of the mannequins and “madam’s” right hand. With her sharp ways and shrewish tongue, her touch for textures and her eye for line, she was indispensable.

Her small face drawn by fatigue, her back aching as if it would break, her nerves worn to a frazzle, she stood in the middle of the soft white carpet, watching the young girls from the upper regions, in their white pinafores and cotton gloves, rolling up the great masses of silks and satins whose bright colors billowed and overflowed on to the gilt tables and chairs, deftly folding up the filmy masses of lace and chiffon, picking up pins, hanging up scissors, and with reverential hands storing away the exquisite blouses in the glass boxes that lay hidden in the great ebony wardrobes, whose gleaming black doors, incrustated with pale-pink cameo medallions, were at once the pride and the last extravagance of the sumptuous room.

The sound of a sharp, shrill voice giving orders in broken French in the next room roused the head mannequin from her task. She flashed a glance at the silver appointment card on the table beside her and then at the old French clock, whose painted face shone out between the tender green leaves of some exquisite pink roses in a crystal vase on the mantelshef of ivory and enamel.

“Now then, girls,” she said sharply, “for Gawd’s sake, get a move on! Don’t be all night! Miss Dalrymple’s coming at five. Don’t touch that emerald silk, Maggie. Leave it where it is. When you’ve got a face like a turnip and hair like tow, a touch of green in the background helps. May, get that heliotrope out of the way. It’ll make her look as yellow as wax.” As she spoke, she herself seized a roll of shimmering lilac satin and started to roll it up.

Behind the latticed screen, the door opened cautiously and a man put his head around the corner and whistled softly. It was like the sweet, soft call of a bird. At the sound, she started, and the silk she was beginning to gather together slipped out of her hand.

“Goodness, how you made me jump!” she cried.

Thrusting his red head before him, the man advanced on tiptoe into the room.

“Jenny,” he whispered, “where’s Clara?”

“In there.” She jerked her head toward the door leading into an inner room.

The man crept a few steps farther.

“Tell her I’m here, will you? I want to see her.”

“You’ll have to wait, then,” she snapped back at him.

“Why, what’s she doing?”

“Trying on Miss Dalrymple’s wedding gown.”

John Drury shrugged his broad shoulders and went toward the door.

“I can’t help that. I’ve got to see her.”

Like a flash, the mannequin interposed herself between him and the inner room.

“Madam’s in there. If she catches you in here again, there’ll be trouble!”

“I don’t care,” he said doggedly.

“I’ve got to see Clara.”

She looked at him sharply.

"Why, what's up?"

Triumph flashed at her out of his bright brown eyes.

"I've got the job!"

She recoiled as if the news had stunned her.

"Gee, what luck some people have!"

"Luck do you call it?" he said bitterly. "I've worked hard enough for it, haven't I?" He slipped his arm around her tightly laced waist coaxingly. "Jenny, my train goes at seven. Get Clara out somehow. You don't know what a state I'm in."

"Don't I?" She looked at him, and two red spots began to burn in her sallow cheeks. "You're not the only person in love with some one you can't get."

"How do you know I'm not going to get her?" he cried violently. "If I don't, I'll cut my throat!"

A cynical smile parted her shrewish lips.

"I wouldn't be in a hurry if I was you. There are other women in the world besides Clara, though they mayn't have her looks. Shove that clock on ten minutes and I'll see what I can do." She went slowly over to the telephone, languidly dragging her feet after her as if it were too much trouble to move, and stood with the receiver in her hand, her dark eyes burning on the alert young hand manipulating the hands of the clock. "Is that you, Charlie? Ring up and say they want madam downstairs. And tell Fanny to keep the old beast busy till the Dalrymple woman comes. See? Ring loud, there's a dear!"

John Drury turned and looked across at her admiringly.

"You're a wonder, Jenny! You always manage to get everything you want."

She laughed bitterly.

"Yes, for other people! A lot I get for myself!" She hung up the receiver and stood by the telephone,

which immediately rang violently. "All right," she said, in shrill, falsetto tones quite unlike her own. "I'll tell madam." She dropped her voice to a sharp whisper. "Get behind that screen, in case she comes out this way!"

"Right-o." With a wave of his hand, he disappeared behind the screen.

Squaring her shoulders and shrugging herself in at the waist with both hands, she knocked at the inner door.

"You're wanted downstairs, please, madam." She cocked an eye at the clock. "It's twenty to five, madam. Very good, madam." She stepped back a few paces, raising her voice as if speaking at the telephone, "Madam's coming at once." Then she turned with sudden fury on the girls, sly-eyed and giggling, among their scissors and pins. "Now then, you cackling fools, clear out of this! Don't stand gaping there. Clear out of it, do you hear me? Clear out of it!"

Retreating before her anger like a flock of terrified geese, the alarmed apprentices retired.

"I will be back in ze minute," called a shrill and high French voice in the distance.

A door banged, and the mannequin, who had been standing stiffly erect, relaxed in relief.

"The old cat's gone down the other way." She went to the door, turned the handle, and kicked it open with her foot. "Here, Clara! You're wanted." She put her hands to her waist and wriggled herself uncomfortably as if her clothes were too tight. "Come on!"

"I'm coming as quick as I can," a voice called back.

There was a rustling and a frou-frouing of satin-shod feet and soft lace moving across bare boards, and a vision of glory in the shape of a young woman appeared.

To say that Clara Fergusson was beautiful is to give but a very poor idea of what she was like. All the girls em-

ployed by Fenton were beautiful, but this girl was something more. Although close on twenty years old, she yet retained the magical charm of girlhood, usually lost long before that age. There was a freshness in her fair face, a wonder in her blue eyes, a radiance in her quick smile that set her apart from her kind. Hers was the beauty that looks down on one from the great gold frames in picture galleries, where the histories of the great artists of the world, written in color, are hung; that laughs out of the pages of a book where the dreams of a poet are caught in a mesh of song; that sets the blood aflame, when, in the dim corridors of some lonely museum, one chances on the white rapture of a sculptor's passion immortalized in stone. Looking at her, the student of heredity asked himself in amazement what race of mother had produced such a daughter, what patrician father had sired such a girl.

She stood there, framed in the doorway, her blue eyes luminous with excitement, her sweet lips parted in a radiant smile, too engrossed by her own pleasure to pay any attention to the man and the woman who stood staring at her with all their eyes.

She was dressed in a gown of white satin trimmed with graduated flounces of exquisite old lace. Tiny bunches of orange blossoms caught the filmy fabric here and there round the skirt, which increased in volume as it descended, until it finally stood out at the bottom, over her arched feet in their satin sandals, like a hoop. A pointed bodice of Old World fashion gave to the entranced eye a vision of the sweetly curved breast tapering into the slender waist. From out a setting of fairylike lace, the soft throat, white as milk and fine as old ivory, rose up to its culminating triumph of the enchanting face, lit by excitement and rosy with pleasure and crowned with rippling masses of gold-brown hair.

She stood there drinking in the admiration that was her tribute, and the color in her cheeks deepened to a faint scarlet, as if that intoxicating draft had been made of wine. Her eyes dilated with pleasure; the dimples at the corners of her lips began to come and go.

The artist in the plain woman looking at her rose up, killing the passion of envy and jealousy that burned in her somber eyes.

"My Gawd, Clara, but you *do* look fine!"

"Who wants me?" asked the girl.

Her voice came as a surprise and a shock. It was not harsh or loud or common, yet, in some indescribable way, it was all three. To have matched her face, it should have been a thing of beauty—low and sweet and full of the possibilities that set men dreaming the dreams that change the world. But it was none of these things. It was the voice of a very ordinary person striving to hide the drawbacks of a defective education under an affected drawl.

"Who wants me?" she said.

"I want you," said the man. "Clara, you're wonderful! You ought to be a queen!"

"Gee," said she, "how I wish I was!"

Her thirst for adulation quenched for the moment, she moved forward into the room. Her walk was the walk of the true mannequin. Stately to artificiality, self-conscious to an extreme, it produced exactly the same effect as her voice. In repose and silence, her beauty was matchless. When she moved or spoke, the illusion of absolute perfection vanished. Yet as she stood there, once again motionless—the burnished surface of the mirror, enhanced by its somber background of black, returning her dazzling reflection—she was a pure joy to the beholder. She might have posed for a picture of the immortal Helen.

She ran her manicured hands over her slim breast, sighing with delight.

"Did you ever see such a dress in your life?"

"It's not the dress I'm looking at," murmured the man hoarsely. "It's you."

"Turn on the lights, Jenny. I want to see myself at the back."

Mechanically, the head mannequin put her hand behind her back and turned up the lights. The effect was instantaneously and surprisingly brilliant—a fourfold replica of the exquisite figure was seen reflected in four corners of the eight-sided room. At the sight, the woman who was looking on shivered with pain. The commonplace young man literally shuddered with delight.

"All I want is di'monds," murmured the girl, rapt at the reflection of her own beauty. "That fool of a Dalrymple woman's going to wear pearls."

"It wouldn't matter if she wore glass beads if she looked like you," said the man.

"A di'mond collar round my neck, great, big solitaires in my ears, a di'mond chain, with a di'mond heart at the end of it"—her voice sank to an excited whisper—"right down to my knees."

All three stood looking into the mirror as if a spell had fallen upon them. It was broken by the elder woman, who stood apart with folded arms watching the little drama playing itself out before her. Snatching her eyes away, she nodded with abrupt significance to the red-headed man.

"It's nearly five. I'd hurry up if I was you." She turned on her heel and left them, viciously kicking at the roll of lilac silk as she went out of the room.

The instant the door clicked behind her, John Drury snatched a look at his plated gold watch and took his courage in both his hands.

"Clara," he said softly, "leave off

thinking about the diamonds and think of me."

Without removing her eyes from the mirror, the girl threw him an affectionate smile.

"Don't be cross, Johnny. It's not my fault. I can't think of anybody when I've got these clothes on."

"Then, for God's sake, take them off," he cried, "and wear your own!"

A most naïve look of surprise came into the beautiful face.

"A hand-me-down skirt and a home-made waist! Thanks!"

"You're in them!" he said passionately. "That's good enough for me!"

"But it's not good enough for me," she answered, and the commonness in her voice increased markedly. "These are the clothes I was made for. When God made silks and satins, He made them for people like me." She turned on him suddenly and lifted her skirt with both hands, pointing to the exquisite petticoat underneath. "Look at that lace. Fifty dollars a yard and dirt cheap at that!" Thrusting her foot forward, she lifted the petticoat. "Look at her stockings! Ten dollars a pair! My, but you ought to see her garters! They've got di'mond buckles to match the ones on her shoes."

At the sight of the slender leg in the transparent stocking, John Drury's honest face went as red as his hair.

"Put down that dress!" he said violently.

Her foot in its satin slipper still advanced, she looked at him innocently.

"What's the matter?"

"Put it down, I say!"

She dropped the petticoat in sheer amazement.

"Whatever's the matter with you, Johnny?"

Shaking with passion, he reached out and snatched her hand in his.

"Don't you see where this life is leading you?" he said sternly. "You'd have died of shame before you'd have

lifted your dress like that in front of any man six months ago!"

A bewildered look came into the beautiful blue eyes.

"What *do* you mean?"

"What I've told you before, but you won't believe me! Clara," he cried desperately, "this life's ruining you, body and soul!"

She lifted her face to his, laughing lightly up at him. Her laugh—that greatest of all betrayers—was as common as her voice. "Rats! I'm no different to-day from what I was when I came to town."

"Aren't you?" he returned. "Did you use to paint your lips? Did you use to powder your face? Did you use to stand all day long looking at yourself in the glass? Why, you aren't yourself at all! You wear another woman's clothes, you wear another woman's shoes, you use another woman's voice. Even your beautiful face, with all that damned stuff on it, isn't your own!"

With sudden spirit, she snatched her hand away from his.

"But my life's my own," she cried, "and I've the right to do with it what I choose! My clothes and my shoes may belong to other people, but my thoughts and my dreams belong to me!"

"Life isn't made up of thoughts and dreams, Clara, but of facts—hard facts, beautiful facts; the two great facts of life—work and love."

"Well, *I* work, don't I?" she retorted. "What's more, I love the work I do." Her voice fell to a softer key. "I love the beautiful things I see, the beautiful things I touch, the beautiful things I wear. I love the velvet carpets, the soft chairs, the shaded lights. Look at it!" She turned, and her eyes, luminous with delight, moved around the beautiful room. "Do you wonder I love it all?"

John Drury seized her hand and crushed it between both of his.

"Do you wonder I hate it all? Clara, this life is taking you away from me."

"I can't help it if it is, John," she answered him simply. "You're the dearest boy in the world, but I *can't* be a poor man's wife."

The words were still on her lips when the door opened and the head mannequin came back into the room.

"If you've packing to do," she remarked, surveying the pair of them grimly, "you must go, or you won't catch your train."

"What train?" Her hands on her hips, the girl swung around from the glass. Though she was quite unconscious of the fact, it was the first natural movement she had made since she had come into the room. "What train?"

"The train he's got to catch," answered the other shortly.

"Why, where's he going?"

"Chicago," said the young man.

"Chicago!" The blue eyes went from the unhappy fallow face to the miserable fresh one. "What for?"

"Haven't you told her?" cried the other.

"No," said he.

"Told me what?" demanded Clara.

"He's got his chance," said the older woman. Despite her jealousy, her voice rose triumphant and shrill. "I always told you he would."

"What chance?" cried the girl, turning on her lover eagerly.

John Drury shrugged his shoulders as if the vouchsafing of the thing for which he had importuned Heaven by night and by day were of absolutely no importance to him.

"I've got the job I was after."

"How much?" she demanded breathlessly.

"Fifteen hundred a year and five per cent commish."

"And you never told me!"

He thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and looked at her miserably.

"What's the good?"

"Why, it's the chance you've been waiting for, for years!"

"Yes; and now it's come, it's no good to me."

"Why not?"

"Because it's no good to you."

Taken aback, she stared at him.

"What do you mean—it's no good to me?"

"Will it buy you diamonds? Will it buy you clothes? Will it buy you velvet carpets, soft chairs, and shaded lights? It'll buy you food and a roof over your head. What's the good of that to you?"

As if she suddenly realized the truth of what he said, she sat down. The high gold back of the chair set off her golden head as a halo sets off the face of a saint. The exquisite lines of her slim young figure lay against the mellow warmth of the apricot satin, which shone through the delicate tracery of the lace, forming an exquisite background for the tender tints of her slender neck and arms. As she sat there, with her gorgeous gown and her beautiful face, the woman watching her, with eyes full of the terrible understanding which comes only to those who have shed bitter and lonely tears, told herself that even so might the ill-fated Marie Antoinette—that sad queen to whom the chair had once belonged—have sat and looked when the first realization of the price she was to be called upon to pay for the desires that had destroyed her floated up to her through the voices of the mob outside.

"Why didn't it come six months ago?" whispered the girl to herself.

"Then I'd have died for joy."

"And you say this life hasn't made you different!" cried her lover. He bent over her and took her hand. "Clara, it's not too late. Give it up and come to me. I love you," he whispered. "Give it up."

"I can't give it up," she answered.

him. The color died out of her face and two great tears welled up into the big blue eyes. "I love you all right, Johnny," she said, and her lips began to tremble, "but I love this more."

John Drury crushed the delicate hand he held and flung it from him.

"I knew that before you told me," he said hoarsely. "I was a fool to come here at all. But I'm through with it, Clara. You've chosen between your velvets and satins and me." A sudden look of determination came into his brown eyes, transforming his miserable young face. "I'll work for you, slave for you, die for you, but I won't lose my chance for you!" He straightened himself and began buttoning his coat. "My train leaves Grand Central at seven, and I've got a hundred things to attend to." He strode to the door, then he turned. "For the last time, Clara, will you give it up and marry me?"

"I can't!" she said. She flung her arm across her eyes and dropped back into her chair.

"Then good-by," said he. "I'm through with asking. No woman shall spoil my life for me. I'm a man, and I've got a man's work to do," and he flung open the door.

Jenny ran to him and caught him by the arm.

"I've done you many a good turn before this, John Drury. Do a good turn to me! I've got a parcel I want to send to Chicago. Come in on your way to the station and get it before you go."

"Have it ready," said he. "I shan't have time to wait." Without another word or look at the beautiful figure in the golden chair, he picked up his hat and went.

The head mannequin stood for a moment looking after him. Then she closed the door softly and came back across the white velvet carpet, casting a sullen look at her own reflection over her shoulder and pulling her blouse

down as she came. She surveyed the downcast golden head with a strange look in which satisfaction and contempt strove for the mastery.

"So that's over and done with!"

The slender arms fell sharply away from the beautiful, tear-stained face.

"He hasn't gone, has he?"

"Where do you suppose he is?" asked the other sourly. "Waiting on the mat? He's not a dog, my girl; he's a man."

The girl caught her breath.

"He's the best man in the world, and I've sent him away."

The sallow face looking into hers flamed scarlet.

"Call him back, you fool! Take off those damned duds and go after him before it's too late!"

"I can't," said the other. "John was right when he said I was different. I *am* different. This life has made a lady of me. I'm not common any more." She got up as she spoke and went back to stand in front of the glass. "Can't you see me washing plates and dishes, spoiling my hands and ruining my figure? I look like a poor man's wife, don't I?"

"No, my girl," replied her companion bitterly, "you look like a jay dressed up in peacock's feathers, and the feathers aren't even your own."

"But they will be some day," said the girl, stretching out her arms to her own reflection. "Some day I shall have di'monds like hers—my own di'monds. Some day I shall have clothes like these—my own clothes. Some day I shall have hundred-dollar hats and sables and a car of my own."

"And where'll you get 'em?" asked the other, watching her.

The girl tossed her beautiful head.

"Where other women get 'em of course."

In a paroxysm of passion, Jenny seized her by the shoulders and turned her around.

"Clara! You've got a man!"

"Well, why shouldn't I have a man?" she demanded. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in that, is there?"

"That depends on what you give him."

The blue eyes flashed like fire.

"Nothing an honest girl hasn't the right to give."

"Swear it to me, Clara!" cried the older woman, flinging herself forward. "Swear it to me! On your oath, you're straight?"

Clara shook herself indignantly free.

"Of course I'm straight! What do you take me for?" She began to cry.

Her passion leaving her, as suddenly as it had come, Jenny moved away and dropped onto the chair. A greater contrast to the radiant figure that had just vacated it could not well have been found. Yet from the short, ungainly figure, tense with passion and replete with strength, there emanated a primitive force which eclipsed the gracious beauty of the other, even as in the mobile lips and the burning eyes lay a whole world of possibilities to which the other could never attain.

"Tell me who he is."

"Why should I?" asked the girl, dabbing at her eyes delicately with a wisp of chiffon that lay on the table where she stood. "It's no business of yours."

"Yes, it is." She bent forward and her clasped hands began to tremble. "Oh, Clara, tell me who he is!"

"Mr. Reginald Vernon," answered the other, and the color came back into her face.

"What's his line?"

"He hasn't got a line," she replied proudly. "He's a gentleman. And, oh, Jenny, he's covered with money! He's made of fifty-dollar bills!"

"Where did you meet him?"

"Here."

"Here?"

"Yes. I was going out one night as he was coming in." She turned around

and her blue eyes began to sparkle. "He wanted to see madam about his sister's dress——"

"His sister?" cried the other sharply. "He don't make for any Miss Vernon here."

"She's married, silly."

"What's her name?"

"I dunno."

"Well, go on."

"Everybody else had gone. It was my late night. It was snowing something terrible. His car was at the door, and he offered to drive me home."

"And you let him!"

"What do you take me for?" She flung up her golden head with a gesture that would have been superb if it had been spontaneous, which it was not. "I'm not that kind."

"Well, go on, go on! How many times have you seen him since then?"

"Lots! And, oh, Jenny, he's written to me—such beautiful letters!—and sent me flowers—such flowers! Those are from him." She pointed to the roses in the crystal vase. "Five dollars a dozen!"

Into the dark eyes watching her came a look half pity, half distrust.

"What else has he given you?"

"Scent, and gloves— You know the kind—all soft and crinkly, halfway up my arm. And candy! Look!" She slipped open one of the shallow drawers in the table and took out a pink satin box shaped in the form of a rose. "I got this box this morning." She opened it, disclosing row upon row of pale-pink sweets. "French almonds." She held the box out at arm's length. "I don't like 'em. You can have 'em if you like."

"Thanks," replied the other dryly. "I prefer peppermints." She slipped her hand into her waist, took out a small soiled paper bag, and in sheer bravado slipped a drop into her mouth,

crunching it sharply with her strong, uneven teeth. "What's he like?"

"Oh, Jenny, he's divine! He wears patent-leather boots, and his clothes fit perfectly. He wears an eyeglass on a black ribbon, and he smokes the most wonderful cigars!" She leaned over and took a silver pad out of the jewel drawer in the mirror and began polishing her nails.

As she stood there—so fair, so indifferent, so superbly self-confident—the other, watching her through half-closed, suspicious eyes, asked herself bitterly if, perhaps, such lavish gifts of nature might not bring other gifts of equally surprising importance as a natural consequence in their train.

"Is he going to marry you, Clara?"

"Of course he is."

"Has he told you so?"

The roguish dimples, lying quiescent by the side of the beautiful mouth, came to life.

"Not yet, but he will."

The other shuddered.

"He won't."

The girl held out her fair hand, turning it to and fro, so that the light might fall on her shining nails.

"Why not?"

"Men like that don't marry girls like you."

Clara smiled.

"I'm not the first poor girl that's married a rich man, am I? He's not giving everything." Unconsciously her eyes went to the glass. "Haven't I got something to give? Don't beauty and youth count for something?"

"Beauty and youth are cheap."

A look of disgust came over the exquisite face.

"You talk as if it were a bargain we were making."

"What else is it? You don't love the man, do you?"

"I love the things he stands for." She sighed profoundly. "Jenny, I'd sell my soul for clothes like these!"

"I'd sell my body if I was you," said the other brutally. "You'll get a better price."

The girl flung her manicure pad back into the drawer and shut it.

"What a beast you are to-day, Jenny!" she said resentfully. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm tired," the head mannequin answered wearily. "My feet ache in these darned shoes, my waist aches in these darned corsets, my body aches in this darned dress."

"Mine don't!" cried Clara radiantly. "I'm never tired when I'm trying on." She turned to the mirror again. "Oh, isn't this dress heavenly? I wonder what sort of veil she's going to wear."

"You needn't wonder long," said the other sullenly. "It's in that box."

"What? Has it come?" She ran to a side table, where a long white silk box was lying, fastened with sparkling silver cords. Delicately untying them, she opened it, disclosing, in its satin-quilted depths, an exquisite lace veil. At the sight of it, she caught her breath. "My, what a veil! Divine!" The color came and went in her face like flame. "I wonder what it would look like on me." Her hands trembling with eagerness, she took it out of the box and began to unfold the lace.

"Here, Clara! What are you going to do?"

"Try it on."

Jenny started up and came toward her.

"If madam came in and caught you, she'd fire you on the spot."

"Catch her! She'd have to walk a good many miles before she could get a figger like mine for twenty bones a week!"

"Don't you believe it, my girl. There are more figgers than dollars walking about in this world. Figgers don't last forever. Once upon a time, I got

twenty-five for my figger. Now I'd be lucky to get fifteen."

"What made you lose *your* figger, Jenny?" the girl asked absently.

The head mannequin flashed a nervous look at her companion, who, quite unconscious of the tragedy passing under her eyes, continued to look at the veil.

"I was ill."

"I'm never ill!" Clara held the white veil up at arm's length, so that it fell like a vapor between her and the glass. "Oh, you darling, I love you!" she exclaimed rapturously. "Come here and help me, Jenny, in case I rumple my hair."

The mannequin resignedly thrust her hands into a glass bowl full of powder that stood on a stool by the mirror and dusted them off with a puff.

"Sit down, lamp-post! I can't reach you without steps."

The girl pulled forward a chair and sat down, smiling at her radiant reflection as the other bent over her, adjusting the veil over her hair.

"Take care! A little farther back. That's better. Now the orange blossoms! Quick!"

"No, no, Clara, I daren't."

"Come on."

Shrugging her shoulders, the mannequin reached down and took some sprays of orange blossoms from the satin box.

"Heavens!" screamed the girl. "They're scented!" She snatched the box out of the other's hand and bent her face over it, inhaling the perfume greedily. "They make me sick with joy!"

The other pursed her thin lips together, and her fallow face went gray. Once the faint fragrance of the sweet flowers had made her sick with joy; now the sight of them filled her with a maddening sense of intolerable pain. With a masterly hand, she adjusted the veil over the golden head. The artist

in her thrilling at the result of her own handiwork, she stood back.

"That's the best I can do."

The girl raised her head from the box and blushed delightedly as she caught sight of herself in the glass.

"That's the kind of veil I'll wear the day I'm married to him," she murmured rapturously. "He'll have on a black cutaway coat with a white flower in his buttonhole and a shiny top hat"—she jumped up and stepped across the room, aping the happy bride—"and we'll come down the aisle of the church together, and all those cats of women will be there to see me! Oh, how mad they'll be! You shall have a seat, too, Jenny, and afterward you shall tell me what they say."

"I can tell you that beforehand, my girl. They'll say you're a damned adventuress and he's a blasted fool!" She flung out her arms. "Oh, God, the best thing in the world is yours for the asking, and you chuck it all without a thought!" The storm of emotion that she had been battling against all day mastered her suddenly. She buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Her attention arrested, the girl turned and looked at the bowed figure, amazed. "Why, Jenny, old girl! What's wrong?"

"Don't mind me, Clara. I'm only a spiteful beast!"

Regardless of her finery, the other knelt down and flung her arms around the heaving shoulders.

"You're the best pal a girl ever had! Don't you think I'm one of those who turn their backs on old friends when they go up in the world. I'm not that kind!" She tucked her little satin slippers under her and sat back on her heels. "No. When I'm married, you shall share with me. You shall come and stay with me, and I'll find you a rich husband, same as mine."

Something in the simple words, something in the look in the girlish face, set

a chord vibrating in the elder woman's breast. Dashing the tears from her eyes, she bent down and took the golden head between her hands.

"You're a dear, Clara—sweet as you're beautiful—and you deserve all the luck you get. I'm a jealous cat, but I'm older than you are and I know what men are. You're so pretty it may be all right for you, but you take my tip and make him marry you. Don't you give him as much as that"—she flicked her thumb and finger—"before he's bought the wedding ring."

"Catch me!" said the girl fervently. A spasm of pain convulsed the sorrow face.

"If you don't, he'll catch you!" With a gesture that was almost like a mother's, she flung her arms around the slender figure and strained it to her breast. "Life will catch you!" she said intently. "Hell will catch you! You'll go down, down, down into the bottomless pit that there's no getting out of! Believe me, I know."

The blue eyes looking into the dark ones filled with something very like terror.

"Jenny! You frighten me!"

"I want to frighten you," replied the other, her dark eyes blazing. "You go on being frightened. Fear's the best friend in New York for a girl like you!" She stopped short as the telephone bell rang. "That's the thirty-fifth time to-day I've answered that telephone!" she said.

Making a gallant effort to recover her self-control, she pushed back her chair and dragged herself languidly across the room. Her voice, which had been instinct with emotion, resumed its shrill, artificial drawl; her eyes, which had been full of fire, became as hard and as expressionless as two bits of stone.

"No, Miss Dalrymple hasn't come yet. Certainly, Mr. Vereker, come right up if you choose." She hung up the receiver and dragged herself to the

glass, pulling her blouse down as she went. "Mr. Vereker's coming up," said she.

"Who's he?"

"The man Miss Dalrymple's going to marry, of course, goosie. She's sent him to see her dress."

"Am I to take it off, then?" asked the girl.

"No. She won't try it on because it's unlucky. She wants him to see it on you."

"I'm glad of that. He'd never know what it was like if he only saw it on her." She put her hands to her waist and shook out her lace flounces daintily. "Ever seen him?"

"Yep."

Clara looked at her curiously.

"What's he like?"

"A rotter like the rest," replied the head mannequin indifferently.

"Rich?"

Jenny sniffed.

"Rotters are always rich." The telephone bell rang again. "Gawd, that makes thirty-six! Hullo! Hullo! Very good, madam." She hung up the receiver. "The old beast says you're to put on some rouge."

The girl went over to a small French escritoire that had been turned into a dressing table and took a long stick of rouge out of one of the drawers.

"I don't believe in rouging when you've got a skin like mine."

"You'd believe in a pail of whitewash if you'd got a skin like hers," replied the other tartly. "They're sure to have candles on the altar to-morrow, so I s'pose I'd better light these." She picked up a match box and began lighting the primrose-colored candles in crystal sconces at the sides of the mirrors that lined the room.

There was a knocking, and a man's voice was heard asking if he might come in. At the sound, the girl stopped fussing with her laces and her blue eyes fastened themselves on the door.

Raymond Vereker was over six foot high and irreproachably turned out. It was, however, neither his good-looking face, with its waxed blond mustache, nor the smartness of his clothes, which lay to his well-set-up figure without a crease, that attracted instant attention so much as his extraordinary assurance of bearing and the insolent charm of his daring eyes. Radiating prosperity and success, with his immaculate top hat in one hand and his gold-mounted tortoise-shell stick in the other, he advanced gayly into the room.

"Good afternoon," said he, taking in the short, plump figure, critically surveying him, at a glance. "Miss Dalrymple——" He came to an abrupt stop. His dark eyes, looking over the plump shoulder, had fallen upon the beautiful figure beyond.

"Reggie!" the girl cried.

"Clara!"

The two of them stood looking at each other as if they had been turned to stone. Behind the door, the head mannequin struck her hands together softly and her eyes flamed.

"My God!" she said under her breath. "The man!"

For an instant there was a pause of such intensity that the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece behind the roses made itself distinctly heard. Then the girl rushed forward with the rouge stick in her hand and two bright red spots burning on her cheeks.

"Oh, Reggie, you mustn't come up here! If madam catches you, there'll be all sorts of trouble!"

In an agony of apprehension, Raymond Vereker looked at the inner door.

"For God's sake, be careful! Don't speak so loud!"

"It's all right," said the girl reassuringly. "She's downstairs. But you can't stay now." She came a few steps nearer. "We're expecting Miss Dalrymple and her financy to see her wedding gown."

"That's what he's come for, my dear," said the other woman, her malicious eyes fixed on the man's embarrassed face. "To see the wedding gown."

"What on earth do you mean?" asked the girl loudly.

"For God's sake, be careful!" reiterated the man. He began to back to the door. "It's all right, Clara. I'll explain everything later on."

"Oh, no, you won't!" cried the girl, flinging herself in front of the door. "You'll explain everything now! What are you looking like that for? What does she mean by saying you've come up to see Miss Dalrymple's gown? Who are you? Answer me! Who are you?"

"He's Mr. Raymond Vereker, my dear," said a malicious voice from the background, "who's going to marry Miss Dalrymple at Grace Church tomorrow afternoon at three!"

"God!" cried the girl. She dropped into a chair as if she had been struck down by an unseen hand.

For a moment, Raymond Vereker hesitated; then he turned furiously on the woman behind him, smiling triumphantly out of the shadows like a malignant fate.

"Here! You get out of this!"

"All right," she returned, insolently languid. "I'm going." She shook his hand off her arm. "There's no need to push me. I'm going."

"Get out, damn you! Do you hear me?" he muttered. "Get out!"

He watched her go. As the door closed behind her, he went swiftly back. The still figure in the gilt chair, in its exquisite gown, meant more to him than he had realized. The beauty of the stricken face, white as death, with the two spots of artificial red blazing on either cheek, moved him far more deeply than furious imprecations or bucketfuls of tears. He could have stepped without a pang over the body of a woman dying for his sake if she

had been badly dressed or plain, but toward this exquisite tragedy, in its setting of beauty, he experienced a quickening of tenderness that surprised him. As he went toward her, he registered a secret vow that she should have the best diamonds from Tiffany's that money could buy.

"Clara!" he murmured. "My darling!" He bent over her and attempted to take her hand.

His touch restored the dead figure to life.

"Take your hands off me! I want an explanation! I don't want you!" She pushed him away from her and got up. "Explain why you passed under a name that wasn't your own! Explain why you said you was free! Explain why you're going to marry another woman to-morrow, and all these weeks you've been making love to me!"

"Because I was mad for you, Clara," he answered. "I couldn't help myself. Not a man in the world, in my position, that wouldn't have done the same."

"Don't you believe it!" she cried. "There are plenty of men in the world who are not liars and cheats!"

Under his blond mustache, Raymond Vereker smiled.

"There are precious few, when it comes to a question of a woman they love."

"Love!" cried the girl, and her voice was scathing. "It's a fine love that takes all and gives nothing in exchange!"

"You were ready enough to take the things I had to give!"

"What things have you ever given me?" she asked him furiously. "Flowers?" She ran across the room, snatched the roses out of the crystal vase, and threw them before him. "Candy?" She opened the box on the table and flung the contents all over the ground. The pale-pink almonds lay on the white velvet carpet like flowers.

"Jewels?" She took a small bauble, strung on a fine gold chain, from her neck, snapped it in two, and flung it at his feet. "Take them! If that's the only way I can get them, then they're not for me!"

"Ah, there speaks the true woman!" said the man bitterly. "You talk of men wanting everything for nothing, but it's women who take all they can get and then squeal when it comes to paying the price. If you'd done what I wanted, this would never have occurred."

"If I'd done what you wanted," she retorted, "where would I have been to-day?"

Overcome with passion, he reached out toward her.

"In my arms!"

"Down, down, down, in the bottomless pit of hell, where there's no getting out!" she whispered, shaking with excitement. "That's where I'd have been!" She turned on him, flinging up her arms. "Oh, what did you take me for, that you should treat me so?"

"For the woman I love," he said ardently. "By God, Clara, when I look at you, with your great eyes flashing and your beautiful face all flushed with rage, standing there in that gorgeous gown, with that veil on your golden head, I'd sell my soul if it were you I were going to marry to-morrow instead of her!"

The beautiful face looking into his changed from white to red. She leaned toward him eagerly.

"Then marry me to-morrow instead of her!"

"I can't do that, and you know it."

Raymond Vereker seized her hands and held them in both of his. "But everything else that a man can do I'll do. I'll give you the finest house to live in, the finest car to drive in, the finest sables money can buy. I'll give you a diamond collar for your neck, a wreath of diamond stars for your hair, and a

great diamond chain, with a diamond heart at the end, right down to your knees. I'll give you everything in the world except a wedding ring."

"Everything in the world's no good to me without a wedding ring!" she answered fiercely.

Some look in the beautiful face, some tone in the indignant young voice whipped the man's rising emotion to a very madness of passion.

"Then I'll marry you and chance it," he cried, beside himself, "and they can do what they damn' well choose! I want you," he whispered, snatching her to him, "and, by God, I'm going to have you! Get your things together, my girl, and I'll take you to Chicago to-night."

"Chicago!" she repeated, starting back.

"Don't look so frightened, my darling. I'll marry you, all right. Trust me."

With a sudden movement, she thrust him from her.

"I wouldn't trust you if you promised to marry me on your sacred oath! I wouldn't marry you if you promised to hang me with diamonds from head to foot! You've lied to me once; you'd lie to me again! Every time you told me you loved me, I'd think it was a lie. You've come to me with her kisses on your lips. Every time you kissed me, I'd ask myself what woman you'd kissed before. You've been a traitor to her. Even if you were honest, I'd think you'd been a traitor to me." Appalled at her own violence, she stood staring at him, gasping for breath.

Across the roses and sweetmeats and the little jeweled trinket, glittering on its slender broken chain, they looked at each other with something strangely like hatred in their eyes.

In the silence, a motor car hooted three times sharply outside.

Wringing her hands distractedly, the

head mannequin rushed back into the room.

"Quick, Clara! Miss Dalrymple's here!" she said breathlessly. "Listen! That's her car!"

Raymond Vereker's comely face went white beneath its tan.

"My God! What are we going to do?"

"You can do what you choose," cried the girl, a fury of contempt in her voice. "I don't care what you do." She put up her hands and began fumbling for the hooks among her lace. "Here, Jenny, help me get out of this! She can try on her own wedding dress!"

The head mannequin ran to her and began detaching the orange blossoms from the veil.

It was not the first time in Raymond Vereker's adventurous life with women that he had made a mistake, but he had never miscalculated his chances so fatally before. It is not given to every man to find the girl he has been making love to awaiting him dressed in his fiancée's wedding gown. His eyes, audacious no longer, but filled with a devouring anxiety, went from one blank face to the other.

"My God! What am I to do?"

"Get out of it!" said the girl furiously. "That's what you'd better do!" She shook her golden head free as Jenny lifted the veil. "We're poor here, but we're honest. We've no use for the likes of you."

"There's not so much to choose between us, for all your virtuous ways," replied Vereker furiously. "You wanted the things I had to give you just as much as I wanted the things you had to give me, but I didn't want to pay the price any more than you."

"There was a mighty big difference in the prices we had to pay."

"It was a mighty big thing I had to offer," he answered. "Passion and money—the two greatest things in the

world. Wait till I'm gone. You won't find it so easy to forget me and the things you might have had."

"You won't find it so easy to forget me, either," said she. "When you see her in this dress to-morrow, you'll remember how I looked in it. When you lift her veil, you'll remember my face beneath it. When she holds you in her arms"—she held out her arms—"you'll remember my arms. When you kiss her lips, you'll remember the kisses you never got that you wanted from me."

Carried off his feet by her beauty and passion, Vereker seized her hands in his.

"Clara!" he cried. "Clara!"

For answer, she snatched her hands away and struck him with all her force.

"Get out of it, I say! Get out of it!" she cried, shaking with passion. "Go and lie to her, now you've finished lying to me!" She ran to the door and flung it open. "If you wait another minute, she'll be up and, by God, I'll tell her the truth!" She slammed the door on his retreating back; then, sobbing with excitement, she ran back to the glass and began tearing at the complicated fastenings of the gown. "Get me out of it!" she sobbed passionately. "Get me out of it, or I'll tear the beastly thing to rags!"

"I told you he was a rotter, didn't I?" replied the other intently. "Take my tip and forget him as quick as you can."

"I shall never forget him as long as I live!" answered the girl. "He's given me the greatest lesson of my life! He's taught me what things are worth. Hurry, Jenny, hurry! I can't breathe till I get it off!"

"Clara, what'll madam say?"

The girl laughed recklessly.

"I don't care what she says! I'm through with it for good and all! I'm not going to wear other women's clothes!" She tore the last hook apart and stepped out of the gown. "I'm not

going to wear other women's shoes!" She freed her feet from the satin sandals and kicked them to the other end of the room. "I'm going to wear my own shoes! I'm going to wear my own clothes! I'm going to wear my own face, speak in my own voice, walk my own way! I'm going to be myself! Fetch me my hat and dress, quick!"

Left alone, she stood in the middle of the room, the quality of her particular type of beauty enhanced rather than diminished now that she stood free of the gorgeous gown. The satin lay in lustrous folds—white upon white—on the carpet at her feet, revealing her girlish loveliness in a plain white Empire underslip of soft muslin, interlaced with turquoise ribbons the same color as her eyes. She threw the stick of rouge over her shoulder into the fireplace, snatched a piece of dainty muslin off a chair, rolled it up into a ball, and scrubbed the color from her face.

"Now my face is my own again!" she cried, running to the mirror and looking in. There was a freedom of action, a natural grace, in her every movement that contrasted startlingly with her former artificiality.

"Here you are," said a sharp voice, as Jenny reappeared with her clothes.

"Homemade, but *mine!*" she cried, snatching the blouse and thrusting her arms into it. "Oh, Jenny, be a dear and get me my shoes!"

She slipped into her short serge skirt. Then suddenly her shaking hands, plucking nervously at the fastenings, dropped to her sides and the passion died out of her face, leaving it white and cold. Her eyes went around the room, lingering on the exquisite harmonies of apricot and blue and gold, the mirrors that had reflected her face so often, the gowns she had worn, the fan she had used, the gold chair on which she would never sit again, until they came to rest, with an extraordinary

tenderness, on the discarded splendor of the wedding gown.

She went softly across the room, picked up the dress, and laid it delicately on the sofa, her hands caressing it almost as if she had been putting a loved child to rest. Then she turned to the veil and gathered it to her and kissed it with a fierce passion that would never inform any kiss of hers again as long as she lived.

"Good-by!" she said. "Good-by! Oh, all you beautiful things that I love, good-by!" Moved to the very depths of her simple, shallow soul, two great tears welled up into her blue eyes and fell sparkling on to the delicate veil.

Behind her back, Jenny, entering with the shoes in her hand, saw the door open cautiously and a red head thrust itself around the screen. Flinging the shoes to Clara, she darted forward and beckoned him in.

"Come in, quick!" she whispered.

John Drury came in.

He had his hat on the back of his head and a small traveling bag in his hand.

"Where's the parcel you want to send to Chicago?" he demanded.

She pointed to the girl sitting on the floor, disgustedly surveying her cheap, ready-made shoes.

"There!"

"Clara?" John Drury came forward with a run and stood looking down at the beautiful, tear-stained face, amazed. "What's happened?"

The girl looked up at him, a depth of expression in her blue eyes that he had never seen there before.

"I've found out that the man I loved is a rotter, and that I'm a rotter, too." Overwhelmed, he stared at her.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get out of here." She stamped her feet into her shoes and put up her hands. "Help me up, Johnny!"

"Where are you going?" he asked, bewildered.

She laughed recklessly.

"I don't know."

As she got to her feet, John Drury, greatly daring, caught her in his arms and held her fast.

"Come with me, Clara!" he whispered, his honest face convulsed with passion. "Oh, my darling, marry me! I haven't got much to offer, but at least it'll be your own."

"That's what I want," she answered him. "Real life, real work, real love. I want my feet on rock bottom. I've done with make-believe."

"Come to the magistrate's now," he implored her, "and we'll go to Chicago together to-night."

With a laugh that rang through the room, the girl seized her small velvet hat and jammed it down onto her head with both hands.

"All right!" she cried. "I'm not worth much, Johnny, but if you want me, you can have me. I'm through with this sort of life for good." She snatched herself from his arms and turned impulsively to the quiet figure standing in the background looking on. "Good-by, Jenny, old girl." She threw her arms round the woman's neck and kissed her. "God bless you! Wish me luck!"

"All the luck in the world to both of you," answered the other, holding out her left hand to the radiant man.

For a moment the three of them stood linked together—the three lives that had touched on their way to eternity and that would never meet again. Then they fell apart and, hand in hand, laughing like two children, the boy and the girl went away.

For a long time the head mannequin stood there silently, and her eyes, too, traveled slowly around the beautiful room. This was her portion—to live with beauty, to live by beauty, to live through beauty, and yet to be denied all share in the beauty of life, herself.

"An invaluable incongruity in my landscape of beauty"—that was what she had been called.

Fenton's eyes—the eyes of a thinker in the face of a sensualist—rose before her, and she writhed again in spirit as she had writhed on that opening day when she had stood stiffly erect, with arms squared to the exact angle demanded by etiquette, while the great man, who had picked her up, used her, and flung her away, followed by his train of smiling girls and flattering patrons, had laughingly drawn their attention to her ugliness as they had passed her by—"an invaluable incongruity in my landscape of beauty." A sorry fate, for a woman whose whole life was a seething passion for beautiful things!

The bitterness of her own soul rose up like a flood within her, and she saw, as in a vision, the tired hands that had evolved those silken textures of gorgeous hue, the aching eyes that had bent for weary hours over the intricate mysteries of the cobweb laces, the sad hearts that had expended themselves in fashioning this loveliness for others. The bitter envy, the sullen discontent, even the pricked fingers and tired feet of the little apprentices and machinists—drudges in the temple of beauty—rose up and tormented her. All the pain of the world seemed to center itself in that sumptuous room.

What, then, she asked herself, was the meaning of beauty? Was it only another name for pain, even as love was only another name for sorrow? Or were they all but component parts of one great whole, each fulfilling some mysterious purpose of the Creator Who had called all things into being out of the void?

At the thought, the tender hands of the twilight reached out and touched her sad heart, bringing it consolation. If ugliness served to enhance beauty, she, also, had her use in the world.

She, too, might, through her own shortcomings, help, if only as a background, to create the thing that she loved.

She stood there lost in thought, and the lengthening shadows patterned themselves fantastically on the white carpet, creeping nearer and nearer until they wove their mystic spells around her feet. The fading light fell on her tenderly, restoring the lost youth to her worn face, bringing out the lights in her dark masses of hair, lending her a statuesque splendor of pose that far surpassed the superficial symmetry of the years that had flown. In that enchanted world of the dying day, her so-called ugliness fell from her like a disfiguring disguise. She was no longer an "incongruity." Rather, she was the center point of distinction, the animating essence of contrast which is the fundamental principle of all beauty. She was the soul of the beautiful room.

Motionless, alone, superbly self-sufficing in her isolation, she stood there, and the beautiful, inanimate things around her—subordinate to the power that flowed out of her—became *her* background, serving her as a foil, whose whole life was spent in serving them. Their splendor diminished, their brightness subdued, they merged and melted into her being until she and they were one.

So, in the twilight and the silence, the great lesson of life came to the head mannequin.

To others, the charm of the sunshine and the beauty of the body. To her, the germinating passions of obscurity and the understanding soul. They had all—and they had nothing. She had nothing—and she had all. She was ugly, but beauty, in its most perfect aspect, lay within her. She was unloved, but her hands had given his heart's desire to the man she loved.



THE INSCRUTABLE

WHAT one has taught, pray say to me,
The spider his geometry?

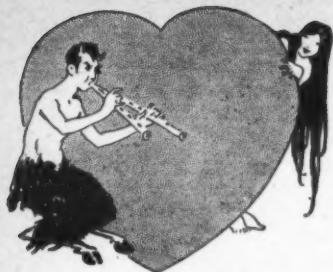
What one has shown, what workman skilled,
The coral insect how to build?

Or what constructor, shrewd of sense,
Inspired the ant's intelligence?

What weaver, with artistic zest,
Shaped models for the oriole's nest?

The Inscrutable! Could we but view,
We should see man's instructor, too!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



Out of Bounds

By John Fleming Wilson

Author of "The Man Who Came Back,"
"Sorcery," etc.

MAXWELL BLANFORD has been gone two years, and I am sure he will never again be seen either in the American Museum of Natural History, the Aquarium in Honolulu, the Botanical Gardens in Sydney, or his little workshop over the tobacconist's in Calle de Sucre, à 2, Panama. Whether he has found the object of his search I cannot tell. When memory brings back the spell of his dark eyes and the magic of his low-toned voice, I think he has not come back because he was, at last, successful. Yet when I suddenly hear the roar of the city below me, the squeak of the elevator door outside, and the sulky voice of a shabbily uniformed West Indian saying *he* "don't know nothin' about the telephom girl," I am sure that Maxwell Blanford belongs in an unreal world, which was a fabric of dreams. Anyway, his right-hand man, Foxy, is dead. Blanford always said that he would be helpless without *him*. On the other hand—

I first ran across Maxwell some eighteen years ago in a money changer's shop in Colón, one wet June morning. Colón hadn't been washed and wiped and arranged like a Pennsylvania housewife's pantry shelves in those days; the main street was a bog in the rainy season, turtle shells festered on the beach, fever-shaken blacks huddled in the lee of De Lesseps' statue, and those of us whom business took to the Isthmus were brethren in distress.

The money changer took my six

double eagles and dumped three sacks of coin on the shelf in front of me.

"The robber!" said a soft voice beside me. "What shall we do to him, partner? Bang his head in with a Chileno dollar?" I swung round to face a gaunt, dark, hairy man clad in immaculate white clothes. "Or will this unchristened son of seven devils come across with another sack of pewter?"

"Who are you?" I demanded with absolute directness.

My question got one kind of answer from the sweating money changer, who whisked away two of the coin sacks and substituted three others. From the corner of my eye, I saw the strange visitor flash a single glance at the wretched broker, who grew as pallid as the adulterated silver he dealt in.

"Amigo!" whined the shopkeeper.

Paying no attention to him, the other beckoned to a cadaverous-looking yellow-skinned negro and pointed to the money. The servant gathered it up, and his master, taking me familiarly by the arm, drew me out into the steaming street.

"Excuse me," he said, smiling down at me. "I couldn't see a fellow American robbed by a man with three colors in his blood."

I drew my arm from his fingers and remonstrated. I told him bluntly that I didn't purpose being defrauded of my total wealth by the methods of the strong-armed bandit.

"I'd have had fifty per cent of my

money, anyway, from that broker," I said.

The man nodded affably, apologized, and dug a card out of his pocket. I took it and read:

Maxwell Blanford

Taxidermist

Naturalist

"And this chap," he continued, waving one slender hand at the negro, "is my friend and assistant, Foxy."

Reluctantly I admitted that I was obliged to him.

"You seem to be well known here," I snapped.

He laughed gently.

"Fairly so. As a matter of fact, I ran into that scoundrel of a half-breed banker long since. He had to get well acquainted with me before he acknowledged his rascality and made good what he had filched. Going across?"

"If a train goes," I responded.

"A train will go," he said firmly. "I happen to be on government business, and I can arrange for a train to Panama. Also, I have some good quinine here. Have some?"

We stood in the middle of the foul street, and I took fifteen grains on my tongue like a child.

"Much better," he murmured. "Now, if Doc Egbert were here, we'd have some of *his* stuff and laugh at fever. But the pure quinine goes pretty well, I find."

In spite of myself, I crossed the Isthmus with my new-found friend, arrived in Panama late in the evening in a raging tempest, and was promptly taken by Blanford to his own quarters, for a terrific headache had come on me and I wished I were dead.

So began an intimacy with the man which lasted till he bade me good-by two years ago. I believe now that I was the only close friend Blanford had. Of course he was well known by half the naturalists in Europe and America, and

was respected by all the explorers. But I can discover no one to whom he confided a great deal of his experience nor any one who ever had an inkling of the reason he never succeeded in delivering to the directors of the American Museum the specimen of *Protopithecus Aureus* which he promised. But I hear suggestions now and then that my friend was an impostor. Titherton, the authority on mollusks, ought to know better. But not long ago, he added a footnote to one of his treatises to the effect that "undemonstrated assertions of M. Blanford to the contrary should be received cautiously. This investigator was frequently misled by his imagination."

Titherton is too far away for me to reach him directly. But he ought to refrain from generalizations like that. It is unfair to a scientist to whom he owes much and who can't answer such slanders personally. As I say, I knew Blanford for eighteen years, and I know the story of his expedition after a specimen of the fabulous *Protopithecus Aureus* or fair-haired gigantic ape. Also, I can swear that Blanford wasn't suffering from fever when he related that strange adventure. He was as cool and collected as one of Titherton's mollusks. And there were so many strange things about Blanford and his relations with his factotum, Foxy, that I see no reason to doubt the truth of what he told me.

Let me pass over several years, during which I met Blanford, always accompanied by his negro, in various parts of the world. I especially recall meeting him in Saigon—he was doing a bit of work for the French government in the matter of marine mammals—again in southern Oregon, where he was studying the habits of some prehistoric horse, and often in Honolulu and Panama. I grew to know him as a man mostly self-educated, but thoroughly a scientist both in spirit and

in method. He read widely. He was forever picking up some new language and satisfying himself as to its philology.

"I found three fossil mammals by running down the meaning of three commonplace nouns in Bohemian," he told me once. "The words described animals now extinct. All I had to do was trace those three words back to a certain region where a race now intermingled with the present conglomerate Bohemians came from, and right between two rivers I dug up the complete skeletons."

"But you're a naturalist," I protested. "Not a paleontologist."

That was what I often told him, for I knew he roused a great deal of criticism among reputable scientists by his unauthorized and impulsive excursions into another field than his own. Blanford never could see that he was hurting himself by not recognizing that it was one thing to risk his life to bring out a shrieking, murderous tiger from a Singhalese jungle to grace a zoo and another to spend six months picking the bones of an antediluvian member of the Selachii out of the cliffs along the lower washes of the Amur—especially when it is a recognized fact that the Selachii have no bones.

Blanford finally told me, one night by the big shark's pool below Kapiolani Park, that he didn't think any creature that had once existed on the earth ought to be pronounced permanently extinct.

"We're all the time finding alive some animal we thought long passed out of this world's fauna," he said. "I'm by no means sure that this is always a survival. Races of men and animals may utterly perish and then come again. For example, my boy Foxy is outwardly a negroid with old Aryan characteristics. Deep under that yellow skin of his lies a skeleton that might make many a learned man suppose he was a missing link."

"I don't like your boy Foxy," I replied frankly.

"Why?" Blanford demanded curiously. "Does he steal? Lie? Is he lazy? Untrustworthy?"

"No," I returned reluctantly. "So far as I know, he's an ideal servant. But I don't like him!"

To my surprise, my friend seemed tremendously interested in this. He quizzed me exhaustively as to my grounds for this dislike, ending up with "Oh, I dare say I understand your feeling. I had it myself once."

"Something about the fellow makes me see blurry things," I remarked. "I can't exactly describe it, but he doesn't make a clean-cut picture before my eyes."

"Curious!" Blanford murmured.

He turned slightly, and the negro instantly came up beside him, though neither sound nor gesture had summoned him.

"Foxy," Blanford said lazily, "I dropped a half dollar in the pool here. Do you want it?"

I caught the flash of his teeth in the moonlight. Then he stepped to the brim of the pool and without hesitation dropped in smoothly. The imprisoned and hungry shark swirled madly across. Then the surface grew still, and I stared down with all my eyes. The huge fish was slowly backing away from the boy, who slithered along the bottom of the pool, arms outstretched, till his fingers closed on the shining coin. Then he rose very slowly to the top, blew like a grampus, and climbed out. The shark still quivered in one corner.

"You see?" Blanford remarked. "That's why Foxy is so valuable to me."

"But that shark! It was frightened!" I muttered.

"It has the same feeling about Foxy that you have," he responded calmly. "Only your reasoning faculties dull

your perceptions, and you control your natural fear of him."

"You mean to say——"

Blanford laughed.

"Exactly. For years I've used that odd feature of the boy in my work. All animals are afraid of him. I've seen him crawl right into a black pocket where a wounded tiger was lying, and have shot the tiger as it backed out on the other side."

"Why?" I demanded blankly.

Blanford ruminated, standing starkly in the sheer moonlight like a statue. When he spoke, it was diffidently.

"I've tried to figure it out for years," he answered. "At first I thought it was some scent or odor about him. Then I tried to believe that it was the effect of his own fearlessness. It's not."

"But aren't you afraid of him?"

He laughed lightly.

"I hope not. I shouldn't be. The boy's saved my life half a dozen times. Anyway, I can't afford to be afraid of him. I need him."

Now that the subject was open between us, I took occasion several times to urge Blanford to get rid of Foxy. He put me off each time, finally telling me that while he didn't fancy always having near him a being whom he couldn't understand, there was a special task to be done which would be hopeless without him.

"And if I'm right in my conjectures," he finished, "Foxy will at last find his master."

Blanford left the Hawaiian Islands for Benin, and I didn't see him again till two years later in New York. He was greatly changed. He pooh-poohed the notion that he hadn't recovered from the wounds given him by a gorilla.

"I got the specimens my people wanted," he said modestly, "and none the worse. The fact is, I risked that last affair without Foxy—and got what

I deserved. But I really had to save him for the big thing. I'm getting ready now to go after the biggest game I ever started after—the gigantic fair-haired ape."

"I never heard of it," I confessed.

"That's what they told me up at the museum when I first talked about it," he said with a grin. "I had the deuce of a time to convince them that I was in earnest. You see, it's a matter a good deal like those prehistoric cattle I evolved from my three Bohemian nouns. I found the cattle's bones, and people had to believe me."

"I take it you haven't discovered any bones of the gigantic fair-haired ape, then," I retorted.

"I'm after a living specimen," he answered.

"Who discovered its existence?"

"Nobody," Blanford replied quietly.

"It's a deduction of mine that a being which I've called, for lack of a better name, *Protopithecus Aureus* is still in existence. For years, I've been quietly doing my figuring, and now I'm ready to start out."

Later, he took me to his rooms and showed me shyly some charts he had drawn, a half dozen of them. I stared at them and tried to keep a straight face.

"Man alive!" I choked. "You don't mean to say you took these impostures for the real thing? Why, you've copied out three of the biggest hoaxes ever perpetrated by unscrupulous charlatans! You don't mean to tell me you showed these to the scientists at the museum?"

"Do you recognize them?" he asked patiently.

"Of course I do!" I said scornfully. "This first one purported to be a map of the world when the continent of Atlantis—a fabulous affair—was submerged. The second one was a stupid attempt to foist still another continent on a weary world. I know that both

maps are alleged to have been preserved through untold ages—to mystify weak-brained followers of so-called occultists now. You're scientist enough to know that if an Atlantis *did* exist, it couldn't have been like this map."

"And this third map?" he pursued imperturbably.

"I don't know who is supposed to have made it or who claims to have copied it from some ancient record, but it might well be a chart of Uranus or Jupiter."

"I made it," he said simply. "It took me fifteen years, too, and I'm ashamed of your making fun of it. Hang it all! They tried to laugh at it up there at the museum, till I quoted a few facts to 'em. All we know of biology proves that the present complex systems of life originated in a few central regions. This chart shows those regions, and, oddly enough, it agrees so far with these two impostures, as you call 'em, that it is really made by superimposing one over the other, marking the regions that are unsubmerged in both and then placing *that* on a modern map. For example, we naturalists have always been curious to know why that part of the Isthmus of Panama that lies in Chiriqui yields new material all the time to the explorer. This map answers that question. Chiriqui has been above the surface of the sea since life began. It, with that small part of North America along the California coast and some of Australia, represents the survivals."

"That's why you've always kept a kind of headquarters in Panama?"

"Partly," he answered. "Chiriqui is a queer country, with plenty of head-hunters and all that in the mountains. It's never been really explored. But the great reason was that long ago I began to catch hints of a queer living creature hidden in its recesses which I've finally identified as my gigantic fair-haired ape."

"Men have seen it?" I demanded.

Blanford looked at me gloomily.

"If they have, they didn't live to tell about it. But unless I'm mistaken, Foxy has seen it."

"And you believe that fellow?"

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked. "It's the one creature in this world of which he is mortally afraid. He fairly gibbers when I mention the ape to him, and the last time I penetrated a little ways into Chiriqui, he almost died. Knowing, as I do, that he is justifiably unterrified by any animal in existence—in fact, never was acquainted with the emotion of fear till he ran across this animal—I'm surely correct in assuming that it exists."

I tapped my head.

"Here," I said. "He's superstitious, like all black people."

Blanford looked at me somberly.

"He's nothing of the kind. I used to think he was, too, until I learned that what I thought foolish superstition on his part was a working knowledge of matters I knew little or nothing about."

"I wish you luck," I said, and bade him farewell.

Thus Maxwell Blanford vanished on his quest.

It was ten months afterward that Blanford knocked at the door of my room in a Kingston hotel. It was a blowy evening; the dust was sweeping through the streets in clouds, and from the water front I could hear the hoarse cries of toiling sailors trying to warp a steamer into her berth between the gusts. I was startled at the knock, opened hesitatingly, and did not recognize Blanford at first. But he stepped in as if we had parted at dinner and strode under the light with a quick movement, at once stealthy and determined. I saw that he was almost in rags and with the pallor of hunger on his lean cheeks.

"I was afraid I'd miss you," he said huskily.

"How the devil did you suspect I was in Jamaica?" I demanded.

"I passed you night before last," he replied simply.

"Night before last I was in my cabin on the *Turrialba*," I snapped.

"Of course! My schooner turned right around and we made it back as fast as we could. I just quit the schooner and came right here."

What was the use of asking how he had known that I was on the boat? The man stood before me anxious to deliver a message. I motioned him to a chair and rang the bell for a servant.

"We'll have something up to eat," I remarked. "What's your news?"

He relaxed in the chair and swung his lean arms over his head.

"I found what I went after," he said. "I have to go back right away. I must settle some affairs, first. I thought of you." He leaned forward and smiled. "You are my only friend."

"I understand," I said. "You've brought out your specimen for the museum and wish me to deliver it. All right, so far. What then?"

He fixed his bright eyes on me.

"I haven't any specimen to deliver. My expedition was too successful. I've found out that those old maps were largely correct. And more than that, I've discover what I always suspected—that we may look to see the dinosaur again on earth, and all the other animals we think extinct. Nature repeats herself, endlessly."

I thought to myself:

"The man is crazed by hardship, or he has been badly smashed up by those head-hunters of Chiriqui."

Instantly he read my mind.

"Nothing of the sort you imagine," he said. "I'm perfectly sane. I have the proofs."

He drew out an oilskin bag, carefully unknotted the draw string, and gently spilled out a flat packet. I picked it up. Photographic prints! I shuffled

them over, found myself staring at one, held it closer to the light, and gaped.

"You're a skilled taxidermist," I stammered. "Very clever! But will it fool the museum authorities?"

"They'll never see them," he responded curtly. Then his voice rose harshly. "I know of only one man who would believe me—you. I had to have one friend who would believe me. It's awfully important. You *must* be convinced."

I stared down at the flat print in my hand and found my hair stiffening on my head. His lean forefinger shot over my crooked arm and trembled on the paper.

"I snapped that at noon, while it was feeding." His voice broke and the shrill cackle of his hysterical laughter thrilled the room.

"Hush!" I pleaded, and opened the door to the servant and his tray of eatables.

When I had dismissed him, I turned to Blanford. He was staring at the photograph with clouded eyes. He lifted his head.

"Look at 'em all," he said. "They cost me months of agony." He ripped open the bosom of his shirt, and I saw great, calloused weals down his breast, as if torn by a red-hot rake. "I crawled for days and a hundred miles on my belly through the brush and over the rocks and through the *barrancos*," he mumbled, "taking pictures till my last plate was gone. Look!"

I stared at them one by one, and the neat walls of the hotel room bulged and faded, to let in the gloom of the elder world. I saw before me huge creatures, shadowy and prodigious, at once stark and undefined. The jungle closed about me, and I caught the reek of fetid breath and the sickening odor of dripping slime and blood. I fumbled the prints rapidly, tearing the leaves out of the book of creation. Then I heard my own shrill cackle of relief.

"You devil! It was a trick! But such a trick! The biggest hoax this world has ever seen! Man, you'll never be believed again by any scientist, and you'll make your everlasting fortune by showing these pictures on the stage!"

I barely caught his murmur, "No one will ever see them but you." My eyes were fixed by the last picture. As I looked, the sense of the mysterious again became strong. A trick? I peered with all my eyes into that chemically prepared bit of paper, trying to read its secret. I forgot where I was, the age in which I lived, my own curious ego, the world that sprawled outside my door. There was no door, nor any world—nothing but a starless sky and a girl gazing at me.

"It's a composite photograph," I said to myself.

I must have uttered the words aloud, for Blanford answered me.

"Yes, it's a composite—a composite of all the beautiful women who have ever lived. For this is the original, the first woman!" His voice shattered under some strain. He tried to control himself, and I felt his hot breath on my cheek as he gazed at what I held in my hand. "The perfect and flawless divine woman, my friend, whom we all thought lost with paradise! God! And I found her!"

I was silent. He spoke the incredible truth at that moment. I licked my dry lips.

Blanford laughed loudly.

"You will never see her!"

I withheld my hand, for the barbaric impulse that boiled in my blood did not quite break the bounds set by my life-long training. I controlled my hatred of him and managed a dry "Yes? Tell me about it."

He seated himself and spent the rest of the night in his narrative. He recited the petty events of his start from Panama, of the dismal forecasts made by officials, of the attempts of cer-

tain priests to prevent his entering the forbidden territory. He went into infinite and wearisome details of the first weeks among a savage and morose race who skulked in the brush.

"The only way I knew they were hanging on my trail was that at times in the night I would hear the sound of gnawing, of teeth crunching a bone."

Then he told me of the first picture he had taken when the savages had withdrawn and the jungle became uninhabited. He hadn't trusted his eyes.

"I thought I'd gone dippy. But the plate showed me it was no dream."

Then he had lost all his luggage except his camera and its supplies. He didn't know how he had existed. He suspected he had eaten raw flesh. There had been plenty where the animals had left their kills. So he droned on till he came to a beaten path in his narrative. This had marked the close of the "first period of his wanderings. Thenceforward he had walked upright, like a man.

"There were footprints on the path," he mumbled, "to and fro, to and fro. And the creatures who fed below in the valley didn't come up here, so I knew I was coming out where there were human beings. Or else I was on the point of finding *Protopithecus Aureus*."

"Apes don't walk on their feet," I snapped.

Blanford laughed.

"What did a little detail like that matter? I found golden hairs on bushes. And there were the little prints of feet to and fro. And once I picked up a custard apple with the marks of even teeth in its rind. Then there was a finger print in a bit of clay at the edge of a pool."

Here he stopped, like a dog at point. I shook him roughly.

"Yes?" I shouted in his ear.

He glared up at me under his bushy brows.

"She came along the path at evening. I killed Foxy because he was afraid and looked at her as a beast looks at its master." His voice rose booming. "No other human being ought to see her and live. Pah! He was a beast!"

With a swift movement, he had torn the photograph from my hand and ripped it into strips. He stood over me gloomily.

"Well," I managed to say with an assumption of indifference, "what do you want me to do? Why this strange journey in your schooner? And all this palaver?"

Blanford nodded.

"You won't understand altogether," he said slowly. "But I must go back into Chiriquí. I had to come out and see some one—you. I thought it mattered tremendously for somebody to know I'd found her. I don't know that it does, after all. What do I care whether you believe in her or not? It was foolishness on my part, I see now." His shining eyes narrowed to slits. "You'll die before long, and all the people I knew. The museum will rot into a mound of sand and the plate glass along Broadway dissolve in the salt ooze of the sea."

"I suppose you think you're immortal!" I scoffed, reaching for my revolver stealthily. "But tell me again how you went after you crossed into the mountains and had reached the head-hunters' country. Just draw me a little map—to show the people in New York that you had your senses with you."

He brushed the pencil and paper from the table.

"Ha!" he ejaculated.

Then, with an incredibly swift leap, he had me pinioned in his powerful arms. My weapon dropped harmlessly to the floor.

"You'll never see her!" he whispered. "Never! She belongs in another world than such as you. Man, I could kill

you as you stand and no one the wiser! But I'm going to let you go. You'll dream all your days and nights of her, and you won't be able ever to picture her to yourself. You'll find women who remind you of her in some way; you'll follow them and watch them; and they'll turn around on you some time, and you'll see nothing in their faces but death. You'll never see *her*."

"But why? Why did you come all this way and hunt me up?" I wrathfully demanded.

Blanford's fiery eyes faded. He seemed at pause, thinking painfully. The great weals stood out on his chest. I could perceive the steady thump of his heart against his ribs.

"I shan't ever be back," he said slowly. "This is my last visit to the world I've known." He brushed one hand over his forehead. "I had the notion once the world ought to know she is alive, still living and still perfect. I had a hope you'd understand; then I'd have made every one happy. But you're all beasts. You'd not be content. You'd want to drag her into your own vile life and smirch her beauty." He let his powerful fingers clasp into my flesh. His eyes blazed up again. He raised his voice. "*What have you done with your own women—her daughters?*"

He loomed giganticly over me, flashed a last look of hatred and contempt into my eyes, and strode across the room, trampling under foot the scattered photographic prints. He opened the door and vanished.

The sun had risen when I stirred again, and its tropic glare burned on the prints on the floor. I picked them up. They had been ill washed and were only blurs. I tried to put together the fragments he had torn. They made nothing but a cloudy, formless smudge.

The museum still waits for news of Maxwell Blanford.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Elizabeth Chudleigh:

The Merry Duchess.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—

But where are the snows of yesteryear?

—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

AT fifteen, little Elizabeth Chudleigh announced with great firmness that she intended to be a duchess.

Just how this miracle was to be brought about was not visible to the naked eye, for, though she came of a good Devonshire family—the Chudleighs of Ashton—there were no duchesses, possible or probable, among them. However, Elizabeth was a budding super-woman and a host within herself. She had an overweening ambition, tremendous will power, a fiery temper, great beauty, and a managing mother. Much can be accomplished with such a combination.

The father of the embryo duchess, Colonel Thomas Chudleigh, had died nine years earlier, and his widow was having a terrible struggle to keep up appearances. Her one hope was to secure a brilliant future—legitimate if possible, illegitimate if need be—for her beautiful daughter.

A plan of campaign had to be arranged. So like "Mordecai sitting at the gate of the palace," the mother and daughter established themselves in a grimy home as near as possible to Leicester House, where Frederick,

Prince of Wales, and his giddy, light-minded, pleasure-loving wife held their court in opposition to stodgy King George II., with whom they were at loggerheads.

For four years, Elizabeth and her mother clung to the sacred neighborhood like burs, waiting for a chance to put in the entering wedge. And at last their perseverance was rewarded.

When Elizabeth was nineteen, and just flaming into radiant womanhood, she attracted the attention of Mr. Pulteney, afterward Earl of Bath. They met in the course of a country walk near Hampton Court. Elizabeth saw him first. The fringe of her dress, quite by accident, became entangled in the lower branch of a tree, and she was utterly unable to extricate herself. Mr. Pulteney noted her pretty distress and rushed to her aid.

And so the start was made.

Pulteney was a favorite and boon companion of the dissolute prince, thoroughly unscrupulous and a scheming politician. Right gladly he entered into a compact with Elizabeth's mother to make a market of the girl's good looks. He took her education in hand, directed her reading, and made an excellent French and Latin scholar of her. Pulteney also schooled her in court customs and manners, and by determined wire-pulling finally secured for her the coveted position of maid of honor to the

Princess of Wales. He went further and provided the money for a splendid outfit, as a proper setting to her beauty.

She became the rage. The beaux and bucks of the day flocked around her like flies around the proverbial honey-pot. As Betty Linley was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, so Elizabeth Chudleigh was immortalized by the greatest portrait painter in the world—Thackeray. She was the original of his heroine, Beatrix, in "Henry Esmond," who appeared later as the Baroness Bernstein in "The Virginians."

She was copied and talked of everywhere. The Prince of Wales set the pace for her adorers. Duel after duel was fought by rivals for her favor. In the forefront of the race were the Duke of Hamilton, the Duke of Ancaster, and Viscount Hillborough.

Hamilton was a mere boy—only nineteen. He was desperately in love and determined to marry the alluring maid of honor. To prevent this, his guardians dragged him out of the country, and he was made to take the grand tour.

Cruel parents and guardians seem to have considered the grand tour a sort of Keely Cure for bleeding hearts, to judge from the way the wounded were always whisked away upon it. The duke was hard to suppress, however. He plied Elizabeth with love letters and besought her not to forget him.

It was warm weather, and all society was leaving London. Elizabeth went to Hampshire to spend the summer with her aunt, Mrs. Hemmer. The duke persisted in his attentions, at long range. Finally his guardians appealed to Elizabeth's aunt—and followed up their appeal with plentiful donations of money. Mrs. Hemmer was persuaded to do her best to break up the attachment. She carried out her part of the bargain to the letter.

The first thing she did was to fill Elizabeth's ears with stories of the

duke's fickleness and his dissolute life. She followed this up by intercepting all his letters, and thus lending color to the charge of fickleness. Next, she carried her niece off to the house of a cousin, Mrs. Merrill, at Lainston. Here the lines had been very carefully laid. An antidote to Elizabeth's heartache was furnished in the person of a fellow guest, the Honorable John Hervey, grandson of the first Earl of Bristol and son of the famous sea fighter, Lord John Hervey.

At this time, young Hervey was a penniless lieutenant on the warship *Cornwall*. There was scarcely a chance of his succeeding to the earldom, as his father and elder brother were both alive. Nevertheless, Elizabeth had to kill time somehow, and the young people were purposely thrown together by the designing aunt.

Elizabeth finally gave up the duke as lost and entered into the pursuit of Hervey with mild enthusiasm. She was now twenty-four and wise in court ways. The game was mere kitten's play to her. Hervey, a boy of twenty-one, was helpless in her hands. He was soon groveling at her feet and imploring her to marry him. Strange to say, Elizabeth was quite willing. It is certain that she was just as ambitious as ever. She had not for a moment given up the idea of being a duchess, but the plain truth is that she had fallen deeply in love with Hervey—to her own amazement—and for once did not wait to count the cost of a rash step. It was careless of her to give way to her heart. She never let it happen again.

Hervey had every reason to dread his father's anger at the marriage, for Elizabeth had too great—rather than too little—reputation. And there were other obstacles to the proposed nuptials. Elizabeth could not afford to give up her position at court to live in the poor little home which was the only sort that Hervey could provide.

Still, they were as mad for each other as were Romeo and Juliet. So, after much excited discussion, a secret wedding was decided upon. This was an easy matter, in the careless days of 1744.

The ceremony was at dead of night, in a church at the bottom of Mr. Merrill's garden. The wedding party tiptoed silently down the box-bordered walk and were as mysterious and romantic about it all as possible. The church was kept perfectly dark, lest prying eyes peep in. The only witnesses were Mrs. Hemmer, her maid, Mrs. Merrill, and Mr. Charles Mounateney.

It had not occurred to any of them that it would be necessary for the clergyman, Mr. Amis, to see to read the marriage service. But this oversight was soon put straight by Mr. Mounateney, who found a candle somewhere and, after lighting it, gallantly held it in his hat throughout the service.

At the request of both bride and groom, Amis made no registration of the marriage. As I said before, such things were easily arranged in those days.

The honeymoon was brief—only a few days—and was quietly celebrated at the Merrill house. After which the bridegroom sailed away in the *Cornwall* and the bride went home to her mother.

That the young couple were very happy at first, and very much in love, is undoubted. Hervey embraced every opportunity to rush back to London for a few hours with his wife. But they cleverly managed to avoid giving away their secret, and Elizabeth was able to fulfill her strenuous duties as maid of honor without a breath of scandal—so far as Hervey, at least, was concerned.

She had now reached the full flare of her loveliness.

"She won her way into the world," says Waters, "by the power of her mag-

netic beauty, by her audacity in over-leaping the bounds of convention, and outraging the decency—such as it was—of the fashionable world. She certainly had plenty of spirit and courage, and in the great crises of her life, she exhibited all the adroitness and resource of a great commander."

Elizabeth was again the center of the gay life of the court, and ringleader of the wildest and most dissolute set. Her affair with Frederick, Prince of Wales, kept under cover as long as possible, now became notorious. Frederick ceased to try to hide the intrigue from Augusta, his wife. She was so busy with her own love affairs, however, that it was a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

In 1749, the princess arranged a subscription masquerade ball. Elizabeth went as Iphigenia. Her dress staggered even that abandoned court. At first glance, she seemed to have nothing on at all—except a perfectly marvelous smile.

"Miss Chudleigh's dress, or, rather, undress," writes Mrs. Montagu, "was remarkable. She was Iphigenia for the sacrifice, but so naked that the high priest's knife would have found her clothes no barrier."

Horace Walpole's description is equally frank. He writes:

"Miss Chudleigh appeared as Iphigenia, but so nude that she might have been taken for Andromeda."

The other maids of honor, who were not strict in any sense, turned their backs on her and refused to acknowledge her presence in any way.

Just why Elizabeth chose this particular form of notoriety is not clear, but the effect was entirely appreciated by King George II. He was nearly sixty, and hard hit. A place was immediately made for Elizabeth in his heart and household.

Two weeks later, another masquerade was given, by the king's command.

Again Elizabeth posed as Iphigenia—by request. She was rewarded for this by the gift of a pendant for her watch, for which the German-blooded George II.—one of the stingiest men in history—actually paid thirty-five guineas out of his own purse, instead of charging it to the civil list as usual.

A few weeks later, there was a third masquerade. But this Elizabeth was unable to attend, as she was confined to her room by a cold—perhaps the result of double exposure. Either that or she feigned illness to spur the king's newborn generosity by worry.

His majesty appointed her mother housekeeper at Windsor, declared that he was happy only when obeying Elizabeth's commands, and went so far as to kiss her in the presence of the court circle. This was against all precedent.

Elizabeth's husband figured less and less in her thoughts. One cannot really blame her for this. She was a wife, and yet not a wife. He had left her stranded, to make her own way. She was young and full of life, and the world came to her almost without the asking. They were both poor, and they were extravagant. They soon wearied of their hidden chains.

Hervey's family kept him well advised of her escapades. If he had come back and claimed her in the early days, things might have gone differently—or they might not. The fault, at the start, seems to have been much more his than hers. No woman—let alone a superwoman—likes to be neglected, and it was only natural that Elizabeth should revenge herself by grasping all the sweet fruit that came her way.

Hervey was appointed, by King George, captain of the *Principessa*, and was almost continually in foreign waters from now on. He was a fine sea fighter, but absolutely contemptible and worthless otherwise. So his wife forgot his existence—for the time.

In 1751, she decided to remember

him. Hervey's father died, and his brother became Earl of Bristol. The new earl's health was miserable, and he seemed quite likely to die. Elizabeth suddenly realized that her husband was next in succession, and she was in no mind to be left behind. She determined to establish her position as Mrs. Augustus John Hervey. If there were a chance of her taking her place as a peeress, she could not afford to leave the slightest cloud on the validity of her position.

She hurried to Winchester, to find Mr. Amis, who had performed the midnight ceremony at Lainston and who was now canon at the Winchester Cathedral. The poor old man was dying, but ill as he was, she insisted on dragging him out of bed and packing him off to Lainston to insert in the parish register of the local church a record of her marriage with Hervey five years before. This done, she made Mr. Amis promise that, on his death, the record should be given up to her kinsman, Mr. Merrill.

No sooner was her marriage regularly recorded than all her plans were upset. The Earl of Bristol unexpectedly recovered.

This was not at all according to schedule. Her position and influence began to show signs of wear. She cast about for some means to strengthen her crumbling pedestal, and fate threw in her way Evelyn Pierpont, Duke of Kingston, relative of the famous Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. He was stupid, ill educated, and nearly fifty, but he was a good soldier, had raised a regiment for the king in the Scottish rebellion of 1745, and had done good work at Culloden.

He was an easy victim to Elizabeth. Almost immediately, he proposed marriage. It was the irony of fate! If only she had not overshot the mark in her eagerness to grasp the title of Lady Bristol, her dream of being a duchess

might have come true then and there! She swallowed her chagrin as best she could, and, without mentioning her marriage, contrived to convert the duke to a belief that their love would be all the "truer and deeper" if not fettered by the bonds of matrimony. You can imagine what it cost her to do this.

The intrigue was soon common knowledge, but Elizabeth managed to hold her place as maid of honor. Frederick was dead, and Augusta, now the dowager Princess of Wales, went on her dissolute course unchecked. She and Elizabeth had tastes in common, and the latter came and went much as she pleased.

Kingston established her in a town house, which was a model of luxury and bad taste. The rooms were crowded with gewgaws and bric-a-brac, for which she had a mania. In March, 1760, a few weeks before the failing king's death—and with an eye to the future—she gave a concert and ball in honor of the birthday of the young Prince of Wales, George III. The whole town attended. Kingston paid for the supper. The furore over her was revived tenfold. Her triumph went to her head, and she distributed gifts of Dresden china right and left, as marks of her favor.

The duke's infatuation grew. He gave her his villa at Finchley and a house at Colnbrook, known as "Percy Lodge."

On all occasions, whether at home or abroad, she succeeded in keeping herself in the limelight. For instance, Horace Walpole tells of a scene at the opera on a state occasion.

"One of the royal guards fell down in an apoplexy," he writes. "Miss Chudleigh went into the most theatrical fit of screaming and shrieking ever seen. Several other women, who were preparing their fits, were so distanced that she had the house to herself."

Elizabeth plunged the duke into the

wildest extravagance. To recuperate from the gayeties of town life, they often ran away to Percy Lodge, where they spent whole days fishing—Elizabeth's favorite sport. At these times, she always indulged in liberal doses of Madeira, "to ward off a cold." After one of these Madeira fishing parties, she came down with pleurisy and seized the opportunity to go to Carlsbad for a long convalescence. Here she speedily became mixed up with the Saxon envoy and got him to procure an invitation for her to visit the Electress of Saxony.

The real cause of her lengthened stay was jealousy over the rumor of a flirtation of Kingston's with a little milliner. She determined to give him "absent treatment" for a while.

For the journey, she had had built a most elaborate traveling carriage, with ample room in it for a goodly store of Madeira. A troop of servants followed at her wheels. The first stop was at Berlin, where Elizabeth met Frederick the Great at his nephew's wedding. She had partaken of all the Tokay and Madeira she really needed, and shocked the squeamish court by performing a bacchanalian solo dance. She ended by falling on the floor.

Every one was horrified—except Frederick the Great; him she conquered completely. He wrote poems in her honor and raved about her beauty. Her stay in Berlin was prolonged far beyond the intended time.

The Duke of Kingston finally became so anxious at her dallying that Elizabeth deemed it wise to go on to Dresden. She was warmly received by the electress, and a firm friendship sprang up. Here began an intrigue with Prince Radziwil that cropped up again later.

Before long, Kingston's pleadings grew so insistent that Elizabeth returned to England. Hervey, as it happened, appeared there at about the same time and proposed to dissolve their marriage. Elizabeth found out that he

was courting a Miss Moysey of Bath, and though she wouldn't have Hervey herself, at any price, she was bound that no one else should get him.

He offered Elizabeth a large sum of money as the price of divorce.

"If you want to get a divorce," she answered, "you must first prove our marriage. If you do this, you are responsible for my debts, which are sixteen thousand pounds."

Hervey wilted at once.

Soon afterward, Kingston became more ardent than ever, and was wild to make her his wife. After much thought, Elizabeth formed a scheme to render the marriage with Hervey void, so that she might marry the duke.

The latter, evidently suspecting something, required her to go to Doctors' Commons and take oath that she had never been married. This she did, but she had the grace to falter at the perjury. A few days later, she told her agent, Hawkins, that all difficulties had been removed—that the marriage at Lainston had been surrounded by falsities and performed in slipshod fashion. She sued for an annulment. Hervey made a half-hearted defense and threw up the case—after being bribed to the tune of seventy thousand dollars. The consistory court declared the marriage void, and, on March 8, 1769, "Miss Chudleigh"—now forty-nine years of age—became the Duchess of Kingston.

Her life ambition was realized. She was presented at court in her new rank. King George wore her favor ribbons, and so—strange to say—did Lord Bristol, her first husband's brother. She should have been perfectly happy, but she was not. Society, which had flocked to her as the dazzling *chère amie* of the duke, now gave her the cold shoulder as his wife.

The bride and bridegroom hurried out of sight into the country—to Kingston's ancestral home at Thoresby

Heath. They chose the wrong place. The leading "county families" all cut Elizabeth, and she had to endure the society of the minor fry.

Her temper got beyond control. For four years, she led the duke a dance, then fate was kind to the poor man and knocked him over with a stroke of paralysis. Even while he lay dying, rumors of a trial for bigamy floated to Elizabeth's ears. The Kingston heirs were using her former marriage as a lever to pry the estate away from her. Always prudent, she grabbed everything she could lay her hands on and ran off to Rome as soon as the funeral was over.

Age and drink had done for her beauty, but the elderly siren was as fascinating as ever, and soon had a great following among the court nobles.

Storm clouds continued to roll up in England. The Duke of Kingston's relatives, left penniless, petitioned the court to declare Elizabeth's first marriage good in law and her second bigamous. At the psychological moment, Ann Cradock, Mrs. Hemmer's maid—who had witnessed the secret ceremony, and whom every one had forgotten—appeared on the scene. A bill of indictment was immediately filed against the pseudo duchess. She was notified of the suit, and immediately prepared to go back to England. She went to Jenkins, her financial agent, for supplies, but the other side had got there first and warned him that any advance of money would be illegal. When she called, he was out.

She called several times. He was always out. The fourth time, she sat down and said she would await his return. At last he appeared from an inner office—and found a brace of pistols at his head. He surrendered with pleasing alacrity and opened his money bags. This done, the duchess started for home. Here many of her old

friends rallied around her. The Dukes of Newcastle, Portland, Ancaster, Lord Mansfield, and Lord Barrington took her part.

Misfortunes, as ever, descended, not singly, but in family groups. You remember Samuel Foote, perhaps, the playwright who lampooned Betty Linley's love tragedies in his comedy "The Maid of Bath." He now performed a similar kindly office for Elizabeth. Foote was the "English Aristophanes," the premier satirist of his age, whose plays scourged all the vices and abuses and frivolities of the day.

Foote hated Elizabeth, who had more than once taken occasion to snub him. In her escapades, he saw a golden theme for his pen. Forthwith, he wrote a comedy called "A Trip to Calais," wherein Elizabeth was painted, with vitriolic touches, under the name of *Lady Kitty Crocodile*. Her career, her character, and her leanings toward bigamy were set forth with photographic mercilessness.

As soon as Elizabeth could see any color but red, she brought all her wiles to bear upon the Lord Chamberlain to suppress the play. The Lord Chamberlain granted her plea. Whereupon, Foote declared that if his play were barred the stage, he would print it in book form and dedicate it to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's countermove was the offer of an eight-thousand-dollar bribe for the burning of the manuscript. Foote, who was the soul of honor, virtuously repulsed this vile proposition and held out for ten thousand dollars. Elizabeth met his move by writing the following letter to him:

"I know too well what is due to my dignity to enter into a compromise with an extortionate assassin of private reputations. If I before abhorred you for your slander, I now despise you for your concessions. If I sheathe the sword until I make you crouch like the subservient vassal you are, then there is

no spirit in an injured woman, nor meanness in a slanderous buffoon.

"To a man, my sex alone would have screened me from attack, but you are merely the descendant of a Merry Andrew and a Chance Love. You would have received this letter earlier, but the servant has been a long time writing it."

This courteous epistle smashed through Foote's guard of gay cynicism. Especially did he disrelish the libelous family tree Elizabeth had sketched for him. He answered her:

"I am happy, madam, to hear that your robe of innocence is in such perfect repair. I was afraid it might have been a little the worse for the wearing.

"The progenitors your grace has done me the honor to ascribe to me, are, I presume, metaphorical persons, and to be considered as the authors of my muse, and not of my manhood. Merry Andrews and Chance Loves must make their money by pleasing the public. Your grace may have heard of ladies who, by private practice, have accumulated amazing great fortunes.

"If you mean that I really owe my birth to that pleasant combination, your grace is grossly deceived. My father was a respectable country gentleman. My mother was the daughter of Sir Edward Goodere, Bart. Her fortune was large. Her morals were irreproachable, till your grace condescended to stain them. She was upward of fourscore years when she died, and—what will surprise your grace—was never married but once at a time."

The bigamy trial was the event of the London season. Elizabeth was declared guilty. She had made ready for such a verdict by converting the bulk of Kingston's personal property into cash and sending it to Rome for safe-keeping. Thither she followed her fortune, slipping easily between the gold-greased fingers of the English law.

On the continent, for a time, her

dimmed star blazed into fresh splendor. Prince Radziwil, who had earlier succumbed to her lure, sought her out and became once more her worshiping slave, showering costly gifts upon her. He invited her to visit his estate near Riga. There he received her as if she had been a visiting empress.

The festivities in her honor out-rived in splendor the Field of the Cloth of Gold. To begin with, she was escorted to the castle by a guard of honor consisting of six hundred gorgeously mounted cavalrymen, forty six-horse state coaches, a troop of dutifully cheering servants, and one thousand leashed thoroughbred dogs.

Banquet halls and theaters had been built, on a wholesale outlay of magnificence, for Elizabeth's delight. Radziwil's magic wand reared extempore villages peopled with happy comic-opera peasantry and lined with shops that were filled to the doors with jewelry, rare tapestries, and other precious

goods. All the rich contents of the shops were intended as gifts for the super-woman guest.

By way of climax to the visit, the prince set fire to the village, theaters, banquet halls, and all the other structures he had built in Elizabeth's honor. This was on the night of her departure. She drove away from the estate followed by drayloads of presents. The sky and air were bright and hot with flames from the wholesale bonfire, while a battery of big guns on the castle terrace boomed a farewell "salute of a hundred and one."

Thence, by special invitation, Elizabeth went to St. Petersburg, where she was received with royal honors by her sister super-woman—our old friend, Catherine I., Czarina of Russia. Here let us leave her, shan't we—without touching on the gradual decay of a magic that had won a thousand hearts?

She lived on until 1788; when, very decorously, she drank herself to death.



AND SING!

O Little Songs, flit out across the dark
On fragile wing!
Men may not heed. They hear the soaring lark.
Still, we must sing.

And somewhere, when the earth is wan and chill,
For one in pain
Dim little songs may tune the dark until
Dawn comes again.

So, Little Songs, though no star-questing art
May plume your wing,
Like joyous birds, leap lightly from my heart
And sing, and sing!

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



The Queen of Hearts

By F. Berkeley Smith

Author of "A Village of Vagabonds,"
"The Street of the Two Friends," etc.

MADAME, I am speaking to you seriously. Why will you not listen to reason? You have everything to live for. You are young—barely twenty-eight. You may be said to have scarcely begun life. If I did not know you as thoroughly as I do, I should say that you were not over twenty-five. You have, as you tell me, a little daughter who adores you, an income of one hundred and sixty thousand francs a year, a house in Paris, a château in Touraine, and your time your own. All that is true, is it not?"

Madame Denise de Perrier's dark eyes flashed with resentment.

"I am not given to telling lies," she returned evenly, raising her pretty head from the pillows, her cheeks flushed.

"Pardon—a thousand pardons, madame! Had I said that to you three weeks ago when you came to me, you would have burst into tears. You are improving. Your periods of depression are growing less frequent. Those wretched little moments of rage and tears, so harmful to you, are past. Tears and anger are useless and a tremendous drain on the nervous system. Your hot-water massage and your *piqûres* have, as I assured you they would, brought you excellent results. You complain of the food being tasteless. Alas, dear madame, all régime food is tasteless, I confess, but if it

were seasoned to your liking, if it were sauced and peppered, salted and spiced and wined, we should have to begin all over again with you. Come, be generous, I pray you. You have always been generous with yourself, but has it ever occurred to you to be generous with your nerves, who have fought so long for you? What they need is a long vacation—an absolute repose; six months, at least. A year would be better. You would then be well."

"You are asking the impossible, doctor," she replied with feminine decision. "Six months or a year! *Mon Dieu!*" she murmured, her lips tightening. "I should go insane!"

Doctor Reboux deliberately turned his broad back upon the pretty woman in bed and for a long moment stood silent, gazing out of her window over the long wicker chair on her private balcony, which was cushioned this crisp January morning with the night's snow. Far beyond through the shimmering distance glistened the jagged peaks of the Swiss Alps, their giant flanks sweeping down to the fog-blanketed lake three thousand feet below.

Madame de Perrier lay regarding the short, gray-bearded figure of the eminent nerve specialist with the calm concentration of a cat watching an enemy whose back is turned, alert to the slightest move. Presently she lifted her dark, glorious hair and let it fall about

her slim shoulders, white as ivory in contrast.

"Six months or a year!" she repeated, pressing her temples, her low, seductive voice reaching to the man at the window. "I would rather die!"

Doctor Reboux neither moved nor spoke. He was thinking of her slim beauty, which drew men about her as easily as roses do bees. He was perfectly aware of the fact that most of the women patients in his sanitarium were jealous of her and gossiped about her scandalously, and that the youths, and even the middle-aged and elderly men, under his care fell in and out of love with her according to her moods, which were seldom two days the same—all except Brent.

Mr. Radcliffe Brent was a woman hater; he said so plainly. Neither the seductive gleam of this woman's dark eyes nor the grace with which she moved nor her trim head and small, clean-cut features nor her superb teeth and fine hands and mouth had made the slightest impression on this English patient, Mr. Brent.

Never would he have accepted her—Doctor Reboux now told himself—had he seen her. Her pressing telegram from Geneva, for rooms for herself and maid, would have met with a polite refusal. Her presence under his roof was a menace to the complete repose of his other patients. She was much too beautiful, too attractive, too clever. Besides, medically, her case did not ring true; she puzzled him. According to her statement, her consultation with Doctor Vallette, in Paris a month ago, had been a superficial farce, and he knew by reputation that there was no more thorough man than Vallette. As for himself, he was too conscientious, now that he had accepted her case, to send her away. Moreover he had, so far as her condition was concerned, told her the truth. She was not the first annoying case he had had to deal with.

Three sparrows who had been quarreling over the crumbs from her breakfast rolls flew chattering off into the crisp sunshine. Doctor Reboux turned abruptly from the window, picked up the hypodermic syringe he had been using from the glass-topped table at the foot of her pretty bed, dropped a scorched tuft of absorbent cotton into the waste-paper basket, recorked a small bottle of alcohol and a smaller vial with a glass stopper that held her *piqure*, snapped the syringe shut in its new nickel case, picked up a light chair, placed it softly down beside her, and spoke again in a voice that was both kindly and firm, as his strong, experienced fingers closed gently upon her pulse.

"Come, madame, a little courage! The truth is that you have needed medical attention for a long while."

She looked up into his intelligent gray eyes, a sudden fear in her own.

"Longer than I dare tell you," he added, his trim gray beard gripped thoughtfully in his right hand.

"What do you mean?" came her startled question, her capricious pulse quickening beneath his fingers.

"There are symptoms," he proceeded quietly, "that frankly I do not like, that—to be still franker with you—puzzle me."

The corners of her pretty mouth trembled. One hand nervously plucked at the lace of a charming *matinée* of pale-rose silk. Doctor Reboux straightened back in the light chair and folded his arms.

"When you had your consultation in Paris with Doctor Vallette—Emile Vallette, the elder—" he continued slowly, measuring his words.

"You know him?" she smiled.

"By reputation. There is none better. You tell me he did not draw a matchstick across the soles of your feet to determine the condition of your reflex action, as I have done?"

"No," she replied.

"Nor across your chest?"

"Nor across my chest."

"Strange," he murmured, half to himself. "There is no more thorough man than Vallette."

"He tapped my knees with a paper-cutter that lay on his desk, and gave me a tonic," she confessed. "I did not see him over ten minutes. So that is one of the things that puzzle you?" She sighed with relief as she sank back against the pillows.

"One," he replied.

"And the others?" she insisted, the fear again in her dark eyes.

"Oh, there is nothing to be alarmed about—symptoms you could not possibly understand if I told them to you; others that I expected to find and that I do not discover. Those that do, however, need slow and careful regulating. They take time. Even the best watch-maker cannot regulate a watch in a day. You remember, a few days ago, my writing your name backward across your chest with a matchstick? And how the letters flushed red under the tracing? And how you laughed when you read them in the mirror? Your circulation is getting to be quite normal. What I am asking of you is so little, madame. What are six months or a year—compared with the future?"

"Little!" she exclaimed tensely. "And you call this exile nothing? I am not used to this sort of life!" She sat up and clasped her knees, her chin upon them, her dark eyes half closed.

Doctor Reboux shrugged his shoulders.

"You cannot go on living as you have been since the death of your husband," he resumed calmly, "and not pay for it. We pay for everything sooner or later," he added, watching her keenly. "All our pleasures, all our follies, even our virtues—they all have a price fixed upon them, debts we are forced to settle in the end."

"I know," she replied drearily, gazing blankly at the crisp sunshine without. "What a deep philosopher you are, doctor!"

"You tell me your husband was killed in the Battle of the Marne?" he questioned her suddenly, his fingers again upon her pulse.

She nodded in silence.

"You have the satisfaction of knowing," he proceeded after a moment's pause, "that he was one of the brave men who helped save France."

Her eyes closed, but she did not reply.

"Your husband's death was the real beginning of your nervous breakdown, you tell me. There was no other shock previous to that?"

Her fingers dropped from the lace of her *matinée*. Both hands contracted, as if in an effort to suppress her emotion. The color crept to her cheeks, her pulse quickened. The doctor bent closer. Whatever emotion she was experiencing, he was convinced, was not one of grief. For a moment she avoided his gaze. When she turned her head, it was to say to him lightly, with a forced smile, as she straightened up in bed, reached for a mirror on her night table, and began to pat the waves of her dark hair neatly in place:

"What a lot of different nationalities you have here, doctor, under your roof—French, English, Italian, Swiss, Greek, Hungarian, even a Peruvian! The nurse brought me a paper from the prefecture of police yesterday that we all had to sign. It was amusing to read the list."

"Ah, yes!" smiled Doctor Reboux. "Switzerland is neutral—that is, we are still neutral, and naturally. But you are French, madame," he added, as he glanced at his watch and rose from the light chair at her bedside to take his leave. "Your French is so pure, so fluent."

"Of course I am French," she

laughed, her whole face brightening. "I am from Touraine. In Touraine we speak the purest French, you know. I am not one of those women who are simply French by marriage. As if marriage could ever change one's blood, as if—"

"Come!" he exclaimed, cutting her short. "You must not waste this fine sunshine. Ring for your maid, get dressed, and go out for a good walk. As far as the farm and back."

"Thank you for the three cigarettes," she said, as he lifted her hand and she retained his in her own. "I was afraid you would cut me off entirely from smoking."

"I said three a day," he replied firmly. "Three, remember, is not five—or even four. Three and no more! I shall easily know, you see."

"You do not have to tell me that," she returned. "The nurses keep you informed. Nothing escapes you—am I not right?"

"Very little escapes me," he confessed good-humoredly, "and I generally discover that little myself, madame."

She still retained his hand in her own.

"Forgive me," she said softly, with a pressure of her fingers that might have been misconstrued. "I have kept you from the others. You have so many to see every morning—those who suffer and are waiting for you. Tell me, who is that good-looking Englishman? We arrived, I believe, on the same day. What odd names the English have! You know—the one who is always by himself, playing solitaire on the sun veranda." She freed his hand reluctantly.

"Ah, yes—Mr. Brent," he returned absently, his hand on the glass knob of her soundproof double door.

"Why is he here?" she insisted naively, her chin pillowed in her hand, a wistful look in her dark eyes. "He

looks the picture of health and he walks miles daily, the nurse tells me."

"There are many pictures that need renovating, madame."

"Nerves?" she questioned.

"Partly," he returned evasively. "You are indiscreet, madame. Until to-morrow, then."

He smiled back at her, closing her soundproof door and joining the head nurse, who had been anxiously waiting for him in the silent corridor without. He was late. There was the inebriate on the top floor to see, the seven morphomaniacs, the fourteen neurasthenics—those who were able to go down to the spotless, long dining room, with its little tables and its boresome food, and those who were confined to their rooms.

Late that afternoon, Doctor Reboux summoned Mr. Radcliffe Brent to the back room of his private study, and for all of an hour, the two sat smoking in earnest conversation.

When finally Doctor Reboux opened his door for Mr. Brent and ushered him out into the corridor, a nurse and a patient who happened to pass at that moment could not have helped overhearing the following conversation:

"I understand precisely, doctor. You will not find me difficult. It would have been foolish for me to have come to you if I had not thoroughly made up my mind to follow your cure to the letter."

"Continue your cold douche at seven as usual, my dear fellow," replied the eminent physician. "I'm glad you are fond of ham. Mustard with it, if you like. Let me see. It is Doctor Dubois who has you under his care. I shall tell him to change your treatment at once. And by the way, do not worry about the electric massage. It may not be necessary."

"Thank you," said Brent. "Good afternoon, doctor."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Brent."

The two parted in the corridor,

Doctor Reboux on his way to the cellar, to inspect a new electric bath, Brent to the billiard room, to watch a game between a Greek gentleman suffering from insomnia and the political troubles of his country and a young Peruvian millionaire, who was finally and radically sober. After half an hour of this, Brent was back in his favorite corner alone, at the extreme end of the long sun veranda, the cards of a new game of solitaire spread out neatly before him, his pipe gripped between his teeth.

"The queen of hearts!" he exclaimed, placing it over the jack of spades. "And I'll be damned if she doesn't look like her—almost a family resemblance." He smiled to himself.

As Brent's table in the dining room was directly opposite Madame Denise de Perrier's, there were moments when she could study his strong, handsome face at her ease. Scarcely a detail of that gentleman's appearance had escaped her. Over the top of the tasteless menu, which began with something very like pap and invariably ended in stewed prunes, she made mental notes of his clean-cut, ruddy features—the strong chin and clean-shaven mouth. Now and then, when their eyes unavoidably met, she saw that his were brown—steady, calm eyes, clear as an eagle's, that looked directly at one without flinching. Moreover, when he rose from his seat, she saw that he was tall and well built, a man with plenty of muscle in his arms and shoulders. There were days when he looked scarcely thirty-five, and seemed years too young for the gray silvering his temples, and then again there were instants, as she passed close to him, when the gray hair seemed in accordance with riper years and experience.

She saw, too, that he plainly avoided women and that his manner, when he was forced to meet them, was anything

but encouraging. During the day, he wore a well-cut knickerbocker suit of Scotch tweed, but he invariably changed to pumps and a quiet suit of dark gray for dinner; being a man of refinement, he refrained from the bad taste of wearing a dinner jacket in war time.

She, too, was well dressed, in deep mourning. Upon the third finger of her left hand she wore her marriage ring, guarded by another—a single black pearl. Often she brought a French novel to her lonely table. It helped kill the time between the pap and the prunes. Brent invariably brought with him the evening Swiss paper. She saw that, though he avoided chatting with women, he hobnobbed quite genially after dinner with a few of the older men, played piquet with an asthmatic old nobleman, and exchanged cigarettes with a dapper little Spanish grandee, whose castle in Spain was as mythical as his fortune, but whose worldly experience was evidently as real as his gout.

A long moment elapsed that morning after Doctor Reboux had closed her door before she moved a muscle. The woman to whom he had prescribed a forced repose of six months or a year lay immovable in bed, listening, fearing a sudden knock and intrusion. Not that she feared her maid, Marie. That fair-haired young woman she knew to be at the end of the corridor, waiting to be summoned by a ring. What she most feared was the sudden entrance of the assistant physician, or the head nurse on a tour of inspection, or the young nurse with the smiling blue eyes who usually brought her breakfast.

Finally reassured, she slipped out of bed and into a small pair of fur-lined mules, unhooked a tiny key attached to her watch chain, and unlocked her traveling bag. From the lining of her toilet mirror, she extracted a smaller key—the key to her jewel case—opened it, pressed a hidden spring, dis-

closing a secret drawer beneath her rings, and from its false bottom carefully drew forth from their hiding place two fat Egyptian cigarettes. With a pair of tweezers, she drew out from the center of one cigarette a tiny roll of paper, and from the center of the other a miniature vial, holding a pale-colored liquid and stoppered with a smooth glass point fitted to a rubber cork. With the point, she wrote a dozen invisible words in German upon the tiny roll of paper.

This done, she returned both the roll and the vial to their original places, locked the jewel case and bag, hooked back the key on her watch chain, kicked off her slippers, slipped into bed, and rang for Marie. Her only witness had been the chirping sparrows on her snow-drifted balcony. That portion of her correspondence destined for Berlin was safe.

As Marie entered, she brought with her two pots of white azaleas from the young Peruvian nobleman, and a bunch of red roses from the Spanish grandee. The young Peruvian had been the more discreet in his choice of flowers. One does not send red roses in Europe to a lady unless one is willing to confess the full extent of one's love for her. It is a plain declaration, demanding a "yes" or a "no." *Sapristi!* What silly old fools some old gentlemen are! She would have given them all for a single flower from Mr. Radcliffe Brent.

Had she not heard him tell the grandee the evening before that in ten days his cure would be over, and that he would be free and en route for Paris? There remained only nine days at the most, then, to win his undying devotion. What a charming traveling companion across the dreaded frontier he would make! Marie had carefully observed the gentleman, and agreed with her. With Radcliffe Brent, she would have no trouble in reaching Paris safely. Had she not overheard him

tell the grandee that he had made the voyage there and back three times that winter? And owing to a special letter of recommendation to the authorities at the frontier, he had had no trouble whatever; they had hardly even glanced over his luggage. Not a word of Brent's good English had escaped her—she spoke it almost as well as he, save for a slight accent, scarcely noticeable at times—as she had loitered in the hall near them after dinner.

"It is, then, that you know so well the country?" the gouty little Spanish grandee had ventured, within reach of her small ears. "Ah, what walkers you English are! You have the legs untiring, is it not?"

"If it were not for my legs, I should never have known half of Switzerland," Brent had answered. "All those quaint little mountain villages—all those dear little places off the roads of others. And the people—by Jove! So simple—so genuine! They simply fascinate me. I dare say I've overdone the thing. I've walked, you see, practically half over Switzerland. That's why I'm here. It wasn't my legs that gave out, but my heart. I might have had serious trouble, you see, if I'd continued tramping as recklessly as I did, Doctor Reboux tells me. If I hadn't pressing business to attend to in Paris, I really wouldn't mind staying here a fortnight longer. I've never been more comfortable, and not half as well taken care of, even in the best hotels. Besides, there's that wonderful hose they play on you in the morning, and the skiing and the sledding and the ripping air—Really—I'm not joking—when one thinks of all the beastly hotels one's known in one's life, it's a—"

But they had crossed the big, high-ceiled white hall together, and were ascending the sweeping staircase with the blue carpet, Señor Vegas refusing to take the elevator, despite his evening twinge of gout.

She had gone to her room, her mind intent upon Brent's words of philosophic satisfaction over his stay. She, too, she had told herself, had been a philosopher; it had been high time for her to disappear somewhere, and she had chosen the sanitarium as being a safe refuge—as safe as a convent. She no longer dared risk even a short sojourn in a public hotel. Her last experience in one in neutral Geneva had been a little too much for her nerves.

It was after eleven that morning when she came downstairs for her walk. The big white hall at the foot of the sweeping staircase was deserted. She passed the empty salon and billiard room. Every one who was able was already out in the snow and sunshine, some on children's sleds, some on skis, some on crutches. The sound of the grand piano from the music room beyond made her pause in the wide corridor and listen. Evidently a man was at the keyboard. The touch was brilliant and masterful. This morning the long black concert grand had awakened indeed.

It was a patient old instrument, used to responding to all kinds of players. It had been drummed on by the children of invalids and pounded upon by would-be virtuosos in various stages of exaltation and melancholia; old maids who could not dance had deluged its octaves with gay snatches of waltzes; women ill, in love, or in deeper sorrow had stolen in and played it softly to themselves, in moments when the music room, with its panels of cupids and its thirty-four stiff gilt chairs, was deserted. It had introduced dozens of people who were too ill or too depressed or too timid to have met otherwise.

She peeped cautiously through the heavy lace shade screening the closed glass doors, to catch sight of the player. It was Brent.

She entered noiselessly. Brent's eyes

were on the keyboard, absorbed in a difficult polonaise by Chopin. She tiptoed into a corner chair as noiselessly as she had entered. Brent did not lift his head, and she, sitting there with her chin pillowed in her hand and her dark eyes half closed, listened and watched him. Suddenly he stopped, looked up, and caught sight of her. Then came her pleading voice in excellent English:

"Oh, do go on, I pray you! If you only knew how much good it does me—how hungry I am for a little music!"

Brent, with a jerk of his head, half rose from the piano stool. His embarrassment was evident.

"How wonderfully you play!" she went on, with an irresistible smile.

"Oh, I—really—I was just amusing myself—that's all," he answered somewhat curtly. "I'm sure, madame, a good whiff of fresh air will do you more good, this ripping morning, than my silly hammering away at the immortal Chopin."

"But you are wonderful!" she breathed. "What a marvelous touch you have—er—Mr. Brent—is it not?"

"Yes, that's my name," he returned, reseating himself with an air of resignation. "How on earth did you guess it?"

"There was no guessing about it," she confessed sweetly, crossing her knees, her hands folded upon them. "Doctor Reboux told me. I hope I am not *de trop*."

"I have a horror of playing before any one," he admitted frankly. "That's why I slipped in here alone."

"But you'll forgive me, won't you?" she pleaded. She rose and crossed to him, her slim waist poised lightly against the instrument. "Do you know, you've given me the first happy moment I've had since I came? I've been so lonely—so depressed!" She covered her eyes for an instant wearily with the palms of her hands.

"Really?" Brent exclaimed, looking at her blankly.

"I feel so like a prisoner," she confessed with an effort to steady her voice, which was swiftly breaking into a sob.

"But you are *not* a prisoner," he protested. "None of us are prisoners here. Every one has a right to leave the moment he pleases, you know." He ran his big, agile hands over the beginning of a gay tarantella.

"There! You've forgiven me." She smiled, her whole face alight. "Now play to me—please!"

He shrugged his great shoulders helplessly and continued. As the pace of the well-known tarantella quickened, her dark eyes gleamed like a gypsy's, her body swaying perceptibly with the rhythm. And when suddenly he stopped and tried and tried again to continue, striking three false notes in succession and blaming his blundering memory as hopeless, she could not resist confessing to him that she had once played it herself—oh, long ago, when she had been a pupil of the great Zurbiski.

"I always make an awful funk of that tarantella," Brent declared irritably. "Hanged if I can remember the next note!"

She hummed over the beginning with remarkable precision.

"Hang it!" Brent exclaimed. "What then? You play it," he insisted, without moving from the stool.

She was forced to lean over him. He felt her warm breath on his cheek, smelled the perfume of her gown—a faint odor of lilies of the valley.

"It's the next note I can't get," he said impatiently.

Her fine arm glided over his left shoulder, and her pink, manicured thumb pressed down deliberately on E sharp.

"You hold the E sharp," she explained, covering the key with her

thumb flat upon it, "and repeat the first theme with the left hand."

"Of course!" he laughed. "How silly of me! You know, my musical memory is not what it used to be. Thank you so much. Do you know this?" and skillfully avoiding the key she had struck and held, he glided into a waltz of Chopin's, ended it abruptly, rose from the piano, closed it, and glanced at his watch.

"Rules are not to play after twelve, you know. It's five past twelve now."

The five minutes overdue had already brought the head nurse to the door, smiling a remonstrance, her finger to her lips, her watch in hand.

Brent nodded to her.

"Forgive me, nurse," said he. "My fault. I've finished."

"But you'll play for me again?" pleaded Denise de Perrier, as the head nurse disappeared.

"Yes," said Brent, "whenever you like. Forgive me for being rather cross when you came in. It wasn't polite and I've a horror of not being polite."

"Forgive you?" She looked full into his brown eyes, her red lips parted. "Of course I'll forgive you."

She gave him her hand as they reached the door.

"You've made me forget," she murmured, with a look that was almost a caress.

He took her hand coldly in his own, opened the door for her, ushered her graciously out into the corridor, and having seen her safely into the elevator and on her way upstairs, returned to the music room. He reopened the piano, and with his penknife carefully lifted from the key she had struck and held a thin coating of transparent white wax. He gently restored this to his empty cigarette case and left the room. When he had gained the privacy of his own, he studied the waferlike coating under the double lens of a pocket mag-

nifying glass. The imprint of her thumb was as clean-cut as a cameo.

During the examination, Madame Denise de Perrier had washed her hands, conscious only that the old concert grand was sticky from the children's drumming, their popular tune being "Chopsticks," and their favorite candy lemon drops.

They saw each other daily now. The black piano brought them together mornings; in the afternoons, they took walks as far as the farm, past the small store where they sold the cuckoo clocks, the carved wooden bears, the Swiss chalets with the little stones on their roofs that always come unglued, hard, sweet chocolate, and cheap, good cigars. And there were afternoons when he taught her to run on skis, choosing the safest hills and pastures and dales hedged in discreetly by the straight pine woods, sheltered from gossip and the wind. There were no longer any pots of flowers to be noticed in passing outside of Madame de Perrier's bedroom door. With Brent daily by her side, even the Spanish grandee gave up hope, and the youths who had paid her all the attention their ill health was capable of now scarcely spoke to her. And yet—all gossip aside—had they followed on those walks and noted every gesture and word that passed between the two, they would have returned with convincing proof that the coldest and most correct Englishman extant was Mr. Brent. His unerring conduct toward Madame de Perrier tried her nerves. His coldness maddened her, and kept her, womanlike, following this man whom she had sworn to win, whose confidence she was determined to possess even if his love failed her, and whose friendly invitation to see herself and her maid safely to Paris she intended to gain, by all the seductive cleverness she was capable of.

"Why did you give up your profes-

sion?" she asked him one morning, when he had confessed to her his past career as a concert pianist.

"It was a dog's life," he declared coldly. "And, besides, I got to be too keen about polo."

"And you do nothing now but amuse yourself—a gentleman of leisure?"

"Amuse myself! I wish I could! That is, *really* amuse myself. You see, most of my hobbies have got to be stale old games to me, and, besides, I'm too awfully busy now to get much time to amuse myself. I've got my uncle's business in Paris to look after, you know. Good old beggar, my uncle. Made his fortune in lubricating oils. I'm manager of his Paris branch." And he told her more about that favorite uncle of his. What a genial soul he was, and what a great shooting estate he possessed at the very tip end of Scotland.

Friday afternoon—three days before his departure—they were on skis together and stopped at a frozen brook in a snug forest of young pines, through which the setting sun burned crimson. As Brent started to rise after tightening the straps of her skis, he felt her gloved hand on his shoulder.

"I've—I've a great favor to ask of you," she faltered, her lips twitching. "Will you grant it?"

"That depends," he returned with hesitation, looking at her queerly as he rose up on his skis.

"I've got enough of this place," she declared, with a pathetic break in her voice. "I simply can't stand another week of it. I know myself better than Doctor Reboux knows me. I shall go mad."

"Really?" he returned lightly.

"Don't think me silly, Mr. Brent. You are going Monday. Can you imagine what my days will be after you're gone? You will be in Paris Tuesday morning—think of it! You lucky one! Very well, so shall I!"

He opened his keen brown eyes in slow surprise.

"I see," said he, quite seriously, fishing for his pipe.

"You don't know how difficult it is for a woman alone to travel in these times," she went on. "I've such a dread of that horrid frontier, after all the stories I've heard, and my maid Marie is hopeless about traveling."

"Frontiers *are* a bally bore, aren't they?" he declared, slowly filling his pipe. "I fancy they've got to be strict though, haven't they? They say they rub a lady down with lemon juice now and then, to see if she's got anything written on her, and they think nothing of ripping open the soles of your best shoes for hidden gold."

"I know I shall be frightened out of my wits!" she confessed with a shiver.

"I see," he declared calmly, between two short puffs. "And as you are determined to go, and we shall be on the same train together, you'd like me to look after you a bit."

She gave him a decisive little nod, and her eyes thanked him.

"You see," he went on to explain, as they moved off on the snow, "of course I had no trouble whatever—special letter of recommendation and all that sort of thing. Why, they even sent an awfully decent chap at the frontier to hunt me up and look after me. I must confess I did feel sorry for the rest of the wretched passengers—locked up in that stuffy old station until the authorities were sufficiently convinced of who they were and why they were there. I'll write to-night that you're going on Monday." And he mentioned the necessity of hastening the formal viséing of her passport and that of her maid. "It'll be all right, I fancy, you being French, you know."

"How dear you are to me!" she breathed, her voice full of gratitude.

"We've had some jolly days together, haven't we?" he replied. "Now we've

got to be getting back. I want my tea, and I dare say you do, too."

He led the way to the top of the long pasture, white as sugar, down which they glided, and before the chill twilight had settled, they were having tea and honey together on the sun veranda.

Despite half a blizzard, the night express that left the big Swiss terminal en route for Paris was packed. Before it lay two barriers—the Swiss and the French frontiers. These were very like the double doors of a safe, the combination that swung them open to the innocent and closed them upon the guilty being in the hands of one of the most perfect systems of military and detective service ever known. Moreover, there was not a passenger aboard the express to-night whose arrival at the frontiers had not been signaled in advance and whose history was not known down to the smallest detail.

The Swiss frontier was passed without difficulty. As they neared the French frontier, there was scarcely a passenger on the train but showed his or her nervousness; wholly innocent hands went repeatedly into pockets to see if precious passports were safe. Madame de Perrier knew that without Brent's kindly influence she would never have got hers or her maid's viséed in time for the journey.

The cold grew intense without; the ice lay caked on the car windows; people standing in the corridors turned the collars of their coats up. The conversation was of that peculiar forced good humor characteristic of passengers under the strain of approaching danger.

The long train came to a sudden stop in the whirling sleet and snow. Glimmering lights appeared, circled by halos, then the vague silhouette of a long, bar-racklike wooden station.

"I dare say we're here," remarked Brent. "Awful nuisance, frontiers!"

He led the way, and Madame de Perrier and her maid followed him down onto the icy platform and into the barracklike station, with its lights and its trunk-worn baggage counter. Numerous officials were in waiting, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, some bareheaded and in alpaca office coats, all silent, all waiting.

"This way," said Brent, as he led the two women rapidly down back of the long baggage counter, favored as he was by his special letter of recommendation. Madame de Perrier saw that he was losing no time about presenting it to the right person, and that the sight of it in his hand gave him free way past the officials. Suddenly he turned sharply to the left, and they followed him into a small, boxlike room, partitioned off from the rest. Standing before a desk with their backs to a stove stood two French officers, three men in plain clothes, and a pale young clerk in a linen duster.

At Brent's entrance, the pale young clerk stepped to the desk and handed him a bundle of mail and telegrams, relieved him of his traveling cap and ulster, and hung both on a peg.

Brent took his seat at the desk, straightened back in his chair, and slowly lifted his eyes to the two women he had conducted. Not a sound broke the stillness of the small room, save the methodical tick-tock of the clock on the wall. Madame Denise de Perrier's dark eyes were wide open in terror. She stood gripping the back of a chair. The maid Marie stood directly behind her; every particle of color had left her face. The mistress' drawn' mouth opened; she tried to speak.

"You will be silent," said Brent, "until I have finished. You are under arrest, Rosa Swartz, as a spy. You, too, Elsa Hauptmann, for complicity," he added, nodding to the maid.

A low moan escaped the maid. She had fainted. One of the men in plain

clothes lifted her to a chair and closed the door.

"It is impossible!" gasped her mistress. "It is impossible!" she shrieked hysterically, her eyes blazing at Brent, her face livid.

"Your entire past criminal record is here," continued Brent, lifting and dropping back on the desk three papers and two telegrams from Paris, neatly pinned together, including the thumb print—bearing its original number—taken during one of the two terms of imprisonment she had served in France before the war, for blackmail. Beneath it appeared its exact duplicate—the one the piano had given him.

Two soldiers appeared. They removed the women, first the moaning and half-conscious maid, then her mistress. The door closed upon her frantically declaring her innocence, staggering between the two soldiers who gently, but firmly forced her on.

Now the punishment for spies is death. Doctor Reboux had been right.

"You cannot go on living as you have and not pay for it," he had told her.

The young clerk changed his linen duster for his winter overcoat, put on his hat, and bade his chief good night. The two officers, who had remained to congratulate him on his success and his return, left him a moment later. The express had already started on its long night's journey to Paris.

An official from the baggage room entered with Rosa Swartz's jewel case.

"Anything new?" inquired the chief.

"Nothing," said the man, putting down the jewel case on the table. "Nothing incriminating in her trunks either."

"And the maid's?"

"Nothing save her counterfeit passport. You've got the cigarettes, we're told."

"They were in Doctor Reboux's hands before mine," declared his chief frankly. "The nurse's suspicion was

correct. Reboux got them the morning of her departure."

He produced the two fat Egyptian cigarettes from his portfolio, dropped them in the jewel case, closed it, pushed it into a pigeonhole, bade good night to the official, and turned to his pipe and mail.

The first letter he sought, opened, and read was from his wife—but its envelope did not bear the name of Radcliffe Brent. Presently he searched in his pocket and drew out a playing card. He propped this up against his inkstand and pulled down the droplight to get a clearer view of it. It was the queen

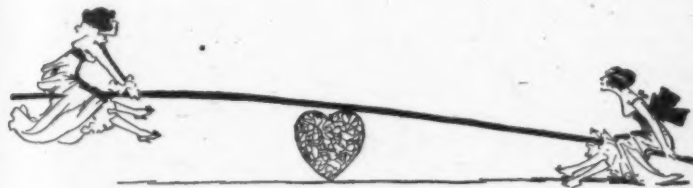
of hearts, and he sat there studying her features—the seductive black eyes, the peculiar regard, the racial contour of the face. Even the mouth resembled hers. He turned the card over; in the maze of blue scrollwork well up in the left-hand corner appeared three words in fine type—"Made in Germany."

The door opened.

"Ready?" inquired an agile, dapper little man, as he entered briskly. "We're closing up."

It was the Spanish grandee.

"With you in a second, Johnston," said the chief, locking his desk and reaching for his cap and ulster.



"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

SOMEWHERE in France, the poplars grow
Trim clipt and tall, arow, arow!
Rutted or smooth the gray roads run
Through patchwork fields or green or dun,
Through villages of stony face,
With shrub nor flower to give them grace.

Somewhere in France! So strange, so strange!
For it we left our reckless range,
Our teeming fields of golden grain,
Our meadows laughing in the rain,
Our burdened orchards stretching wide,
Our lands, our loves—and much beside!

Somewhere in France the poplars grow,
Somewhere in France we' front the foe,
Unsleeping, stalwart, unafraid,
Ready to counter drive or raid,
Ready to back our eldest friend
Unflinching to the bitter end.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



A Romantic Liar

By Lawrence Perry

Author of "Dan Merithew,"
"Prince or Chauffeur," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Robert Trent, son of the great financier, Horatio Trent, is intrusted by his father with the delicate task of ascertaining whether a certain young woman is going to marry a certain young man. Trent, senior, desires the information for business reasons. Eleanor Lowell, the girl in the case, has inherited from her father, Adrian Lowell, a half interest in the Western Colorado Fuel Company, provided she marries, prior to her twenty-first birthday, Robert Pinkham, son of her father's old business partner, who owned the other half interest in the company. If the two do not marry, the girl's interest in the mine is to go to Caleb Lowell, Eleanor's uncle and guardian. The elder Pinkham's half interest has been owned for some years by the Consolidated Fuel Company, in which Trent, senior, is interested, and now they want the other half. Trent's lawyers have discovered, however, that there is a flaw in the title to this second half interest, due to some rather dubious dealings of Adrian Lowell's with his partner. This flaw will be straightened out by the marriage of Eleanor and young Pinkham. It is, therefore, to the interest of the Consolidated Fuel that the marriage take place, and Trent is anxious to learn whether there is any chance of it. Eleanor is now past twenty, and Trent has been informed that she and young Pinkham have not seen each other since they were children. Robert Trent undertakes the commission, rather in a spirit of hilarity. He decides that he will pass himself off as Robert Pinkham and in that way learn what Eleanor's feelings are with regard to the marriage required by her father's will. Upon his first sight of Eleanor, however, all considerations of business are swept from his mind by the overwhelming fact that this is the girl of his dreams, the ideal that he has been looking for all his life. He instantly makes up his mind to continue the masquerade until he is sure enough of her affection to reveal his duplicity. Eleanor's two aunts, Doctor Julia Judson Lowell, the famous feminist, wife of Caleb Lowell, and her sister, Miss Judson, are favorably impressed by Trent. The only hitch in his plans comes from the fact that Caleb recognizes him as Robert Trent, but Caleb is an inveterate stock gambler, and is only too glad to become Trent's accomplice with the hope of securing tips on the market from the son of the great Horatio.

CHAPTER VIII.

AS soon as Trent reached the Cavaliers, he went at once to the telephone and called up the Lowell house. Doctor Lowell herself answered.

"Doctor Lowell," he said, "this is Robert. I've received your note and want to thank you for giving my little affair such prompt attention."

Doctor Lowell's reply was cordial. His gratitude was undeserved; she hadn't gone into the matter and her note was the result of a talk with Eleanor, who, as it appeared, had developed

some misgivings as to whether, in view of Trent's willingness to serve her interests, her attitude toward him had been quite fair. Later, she had definitely made up her mind that it had not been.

"In other words," concluded the doctor with a laugh, "my niece seems to have decided that she likes you better than she thought. But of course, Robert, that is between you and me."

"Oh!" There was an eager catch in Trent's voice that brought an appreciative chuckle over the wire.

"If you've nothing better to do," she

said, "you might dine with us this evening, for I want to have a word with you. We dine at seven."

When Trent appeared at the house on Gramercy Park that evening, he had pretty clearly outlined his course of action. Unquestionably he had succeeded in interesting Eleanor. His unexpected friend at court, Doctor Lowell, clearly intended him to understand that her niece's action could be construed only in this way. Of course Trent had to take into account the girl's natural objection to relinquishing to her uncle stock which she believed was rightfully hers. But even so— Yes, even so.

Nevertheless, he was going to hurry slowly, as the Greek proverb has it. He was too happy just now to assume any risks. If he knew anything about girls, he knew this—a slight shade of indifference for some time to come would be tactically correct. In other words, he would pay court assiduously to the two aunts, especially to Doctor Lowell, whom he had begun to admire immensely. Grim and unyielding as this woman was, he could see that a sense of humor was not the least of her characteristics, and, then, too, he had a theory that, deep down in her heart, she had some appreciation of the romance in which he was involved.

Eleanor was in the library when he arrived, and greeted him with a blush that spoke more eloquently than anything she could have said.

"Hello, Eleanor!" he said in his most offhand manner; then, as she darted a quick glance at him, he nonchalantly picked up an evening paper.

"I've had a beastly day," he went on blandly, as Eleanor sank into a chair.

She didn't reply and he remained standing, glancing over the paper, conscious that she was regarding him. But if he thought that she intended to accept his demeanor in continued silence, he mistook the girl.

"Robert," she said, "I hope you ap-

preciate my aunt's kindness in permitting you to come here. I thought you'd be awfully pleased——"

Trent glanced over the top of his newspaper.

"Oh," he smiled, "I am—on your account."

"My account!" She flushed. "Really!"

"Why, yes," he returned. "You see, I intend to overhaul that trust deed thoroughly."

Eleanor studied him a moment, biting her lip.

"Of course. I saw how deeply at heart you had it when Aunt Julia said you must not call."

"Why, Eleanor!" Trent arose slowly and regarded her in well-feigned amazement. "It isn't possible you're disappointed because I'm not more romantic! That's really a new idea! I—I don't know what to say. You know, now I know you better, you don't impress me as a girl of that sort. There are some girls, you know, who are born to be old maids. It sticks out all over them. You can tell them at a glance."

To the credit of her sense of humor, be it said that Eleanor Lowell laughed. None the less, she launched her reply.

"Some one," she said musingly, "suggested the possibility of an engagement. Of course it was utterly absurd. I merely speak of it as a matter of record, as Aunt Julia would say."

"Engagement!" Trent chuckled. "You girls are so funny! Always reading romance into the most ordinary situations!"

Eleanor confronted him, still laughing, but with eyes sparkling.

"I shan't quarrel with you, Robert," she said. She took a book from the table, snuggled down into a chair in her characteristic posture with one foot under her, flounced out her skirt with a vicious swish, and ostentatiously devoted her attention to the volume.

"What are you reading?" he asked, bending forward.

She placed her hands over the pages. "Nothing that would interest you."

Trent arose and peered down over her shoulder.

"How do you know it wouldn't interest me?"

"Just because I do," she replied. "Don't you know it's impolite to look over any one's shoulder?"

"I wasn't. I was looking at your hair."

She looked up at him quickly.

"My hair? What's the matter with it?"

"Why, it's coming down in back here."

Her hand flew up instinctively to the back of her head and Trent retreated, laughing triumphantly.

"A Book of Hand-woven Coverlets!" he jeered. "How interesting! I didn't know you went in for such things. Now confess. This is Miss Judson's book."

She gazed at him indignantly.

"I won't confess anything. And if you're bent on being so horrid, I don't see why you came here to-night."

"Hand-woven coverlets!" repeated Trent, and with the pertinacity characteristic of his species, he would have continued until he had extracted the last grain of amusement out of the rise he had obtained from her, had not Doctor Lowell entered.

Trent at once stepped forward, and she was receiving him graciously when the remainder of the family group entered, Miss Judson at one door, Caleb Lowell at another.

Trent's encounter with Eleanor had quite tended to put him on his feet, to restore his self-esteem. She was human after all—divinely human, he would say, yet human—and so could be dealt with. And the great white joy of being with her at table, on easy terms with her family, brought a great deal of his old assurance back.

During the meal, he gave most of

his attention to the two older women, with an occasional side remark to Lowell. At the university, a part of his political-economy course had had to do with the woman's movement, and now he found that he remembered a great deal of it and could display an intelligent interest in Doctor Lowell's activities. She, on her part, gradually led the conversation to the war, and artfully succeeded in extracting from Trent the story of his share in it. He was altogether modest in his recital, which, however, needed no high-flown periods to give it point.

"So you see," he said in conclusion, surveying his maimed hand with mournful gaze, "my foolish haste has kept me from serving my own country. They won't have me for anything."

"But you served France!" cried Eleanor, who had been listening with shining eyes. "And didn't they recognize you—your bravery?"

"Oh, the *Croix de Guerre*." Trent shrugged. "But lots of the chaps have done more than I."

"I know, but——" The girl stopped abruptly.

The subject presently turned to Eleanor's tea room. She was already looking about for a place to lease, planning to pay for it out of a small income received from some railroad securities left by her father. She had saved about seven hundred dollars and thought this would cover the launching of the enterprise.

"What Eleanor won't see," said her aunt, "is that business ventures of any sort are always a risk."

"They are that indeed," commented Trent.

"Well, this isn't," retorted Eleanor stanchly. "This will be so attractive and tasteful and—and dear that people will have to come to it. You haven't any idea how stupidly unattractive many of those places are."

"I'm afraid," said her aunt, "you're

thinking more of the artistic side—of the decorations, appointments, and the like—than of the business side.”

“Aunt Julia!” cried Eleanor.

“But,” went on the woman, smiling, “I consider the experiment well worth while, and Eleanor’s ambition to do something is entirely creditable.”

“Yes indeed,” agreed Trent grandly. “As for the business side, I hope I can be of some assistance if she will let me.”

Eleanor frowned and her demeanor suggested that she could do very well without his assistance.

As they were leaving the table, Caleb Lowell linked his arm through Trent’s with a friendly air.

“I cleaned up very nicely on the Middle Atlantic,” he said. “It was rather neat of you.”

Trent nodded, suppressing an inclination toward irritation, and followed the women into the library.

Eleanor went to her aunt’s table and was soon busy with pencil and paper; Miss Judson settled herself with her knitting; and Lowell, seizing the newspaper, made off to his den.

“Oh, Robert.” Doctor Lowell beckoned to him and walked toward the windows in the front part of the room.

As they stood looking out at the street, flooded with light from an arc lamp, she turned to him.

“Robert?” she began, speaking in a half whisper, “I’m a very busy woman, as you perhaps have noticed. I have a great many things on my mind, but I want to relieve myself of one of those things at once.”

“Yes?” Trent faced her bravely.

“Eleanor, as you now know, has agreed to have you call—and it may be that before long she will come to have a very deep regard for you.”

“Do you think so?” asked Trent eagerly.

Doctor Lowell smiled.

“It is quite possible. And I think

you ought to consider what you are doing very carefully. If Eleanor really grows to—well, grows very fond of you, you will be nothing short of a criminal if you find yourself unprepared to meet her. Now one moment!” as Trent made as if to speak. “I know what you will say now. What I want you to do is to cast your thoughts forward and try to imagine every conceivable possibility that might arise to alter or diminish—if not entirely destroy—your present feeling for my niece. I know young people. I was young myself once. And it is so easy to take an ephemeral emotion and say: ‘This is for life. This will endure.’ I pray that you will consider, Robert, and consider now.”

Trent bowed his head in thought. She was a woman of extraordinary mental power; she had meant to drive her words home and she had so driven them. She waited in silence until the young man looked up.

“Doctor Lowell,” he said, “I appreciate what you’ve said, and you’ve said it because you love Eleanor and are anxious for her future happiness. But no more than I am. I think I can say that honestly. We are all of us pretty weak and impressionable when we’re young. I understand that, and yet something inside of me tells me that if Eleanor does as you say she may, I shall be the happiest man in the world. I won’t say positively what will happen a year from now, as to our feelings. Who could? I can only say, after a lot of serious thought, that I think I shall grow to love Eleanor dearly. I base this on what I know of her now. It doesn’t seem as if I could really be very happy without her. I might be, but it doesn’t seem so. I don’t believe it possibly could be so. Why, Doctor Lowell”—he turned to her, raising his voice so that she lifted a warning finger—“when you told me I couldn’t see Eleanor, I took passage for Europe on the

Philadelphia yesterday morning. Your note came by wireless when the ship was off Sandy Hook, and I simply left everything behind, scrambled down a flimsy ladder to the pilot's whaleboat in a rolling sea this afternoon, and came back to New York."

Doctor Lowell had been gazing at him with astonishment.

"You did that!" she murmured. "Well, then, I think I may say that I trust you, Robert!"

For the first time in his career of untruth, Trent swallowed hard. The thought came to him that he'd like to be worthy of this woman's trust in every particular; in any event, he would be worthy of it in the case under discussion. He smothered his qualms and smiled bravely. At that moment Eleanor abandoned her work and came toward them.

"What *are* you two talking about?"

"Something of interest to me," asserted her aunt, with an air of finality. "We've quite finished."

"Well, then, if you have, I wish you'd come and help me, Robert, if you're good at figures. What I want to know is whether compound interest doubles itself every year or just what it does."

"It's likely to do anything but what you want it to do," laughed Trent. "Come on. We'll see."

They came to discuss many things, aside from compound interest; so many things that when Trent went uptown to his home and thought of the *Philadelphia* out on the lonely Atlantic, and pictured himself as still aboard, he shivered.

CHAPTER IX.

Within a fortnight, Trent regarded that day lost whose low-descending sun found him not in the house on Gramercy Park or planning to go there. Eleanor accepted it all in a manner too complacent to please him. Her attitude was sisterly. The ardent young

man felt at times that she had come to take him altogether too much for granted.

He was of real assistance to her in her plans for her tea room, especially on the financial side, and there was one wonderful Saturday afternoon when they went out visiting a list of available places in which to set the project on foot. They covered a great deal of ground, for Trent had insisted upon a taxicab.

"Well, at least," she said at last, smiling at him, "we've reduced the list to so few places that next time we can probably make a choice."

Trent wanted her to go to a hotel for tea, but she demurred.

"Don't you think it would be nicer to go home and have some there?" she asked. "Let's walk," she added.

Trent nodded eagerly.

"It's a corking afternoon," he murmured.

So they dismissed the cab and walked down the Avenue in the waning light of that wonderful late October day. The sun came through the side streets, overlaying the asphalt with heavy gold, and there was a tang in the air suggestive of brave days to come, days keen with the sparkle of frost and with the zest of it. They walked along, talking, laughing, seeing no one, thinking of no one but each other. When at length they turned into the park, the sunlight had gone and the pleasant autumnal tang had given way to a palpable chill. Eleanor paused at the iron fence, laughing, holding her small gloved hands out to the fence bars as if to a grate.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," she said, "if this were a great city fireplace where one could stand and get warm?"

Trent stood a little apart, gazing at a picture that would always remain in his mind, as certain pictures do. She was so dainty and feminine and yet so wholesome, so sweet in her ever-chang-

ing moods, that he was satisfied for the moment just to stand and look at her. Then, as she gazed at him, her eyes suffused.

"Change!" she sighed in a low voice. "Nature seems always to give that impression so strongly in October. Change! Everything that we know—fading and vanishing away. Our lives are very much like the seasons, aren't they, Robert?"

"That is why we should live out each moment to the full."

"But we do," she protested. "At least I try to."

"Do you?" asked Trent. "In everything?"

She looked at him curiously, struck by a note in his voice, and then she flushed.

"Robert, I thought you were dying for some of my tea."

She turned abruptly and led the way across the street, and they sat over her tea table in the window while darkness came and the electrics spluttered on the pavement outside.

Next evening, as if regretting her softened mood, she was most business-like when Trent arrived and left him as much as possible to the companionship of her aunts. Trent himself, in fact, was somewhat chastened, as the result of an interview with his parents, at dinner, who, as it chanced, had seen him walking with Eleanor the day before as they had passed in their motor.

His father was curious about his proposed trip to Europe at a time when the project intrusted to him certainly seemed to demand his presence at home, as a matter of form at least, while his mother sought to learn the identity of his companion. But Trent, in respect to both subjects, was so evasive and unsatisfactory that the father at length signalized retreat by breaking out into emphatic opinions concerning his son's future in the field of business.

"As to this girl," he said in conclusion, "I leave that to your mother. I'm sure, if I can't keep track of your business affairs, there's small use bothering about your social habits." He knitted his brows thoughtfully. "Robert," he added, "was that girl Miss Lowell?"

"Of course it was." Robert smiled. "So you see it was all business."

"Ahem!" Horatio Trent toyed with his spoon a moment. "You are watching this Caleb Lowell closely?"

"Oh, I'm in touch," was the lofty reply.

"Excellent. Then why didn't you tell me he'd sold several shares of his interest to James Oliphant, of the Excelsior Company, our rival in the West?"

Trent stared at his father.

"You don't want me to say it all over again, do you?"

"No." Trent shook his head. "Why, the old rascal!" He paused. "But, father, he hasn't given Eleanor Lowell the month's notice he was required to give her. She doesn't know that Robert Pinkham is out of the way. Anyway, there's that flaw in the title you once spoke of."

Horatio Trent nodded.

"I can't see why Oliphant didn't take all or nothing—unless it was that he merely wanted a shareholder's voice in the Colorado interests of our company, the Consolidated."

"Why did the Consolidated let Oliphant get ahead of them?" asked Trent incautiously.

His father, who had baited the hook, now landed his catch.

"Because," he said, "we were relying upon you. You were 'in touch.' Some time I want you to tell me just how you were 'in touch.'"

"But—but," was the stammered reply, "Lowell has given his niece no notice, as required by the deed——"

"My boy," came the interruption,

"you've said that before. I suggest merely that you pay less attention to wandering about the streets with that girl and stick closer to Lowell. Hereafter you give *me* information; don't rely upon me to give it to you. Have you any idea that Lowell has given Oliphant an option on all his holdings?"

"Well——" Trent shook his head. "I don't know," he finally confessed.

"Then find out, please."

"Yes, sir." The young man flushed and turned his attention to his meal, filled with the conviction that he had missed a trick, and at the same time suspecting that his father was handling affairs over his head.

All in all, it was rather an irritating day and one of the most irritating thoughts concerned Lowell's duplicity in not advising Trent of his action with regard to the shares left by Adrian Lowell. He finally decided that the man, in one of his periods of financial depression, had sacrificed a handful of the stock for a pitiful price, or perhaps as security for a small loan.

He was tempted to see Lowell forthwith and face him down, but later decided against this course, inasmuch as it would involve, perhaps, a break with the Lowell family, and he would far rather breast the paternal thunderbolt than lose his chances of seeing Eleanor.

Viewing the whole day as it concerned himself and Eleanor, he discerned a distinct loss of ground. And yet, had he but known it, an incident was formulating itself in the book of fate which was destined to bring about a very decided change in their relations.

One evening after dinner, Doctor Lowell turned to Trent with a wry face.

"Robert," she said, "some of the settlement women of the lower East Side have noted an interest, more or less keen, among the Jewish and Italian women there in what we're trying to do in the coming election. They've ar-

anged a meeting for to-morrow night in some hall in Rivington Street, at which they want me to speak." She sighed. "I'm afraid it will be rather an ordeal, as I'm utterly unacquainted with their point of view. However, that is beside the point. Eleanor wants to go——"

"Slumming," interpolated the girl with a laugh.

"And," continued Doctor Lowell, "I thought perhaps you'd come along to look after her. That is, unless you've something better to do." She smiled.

Trent, of course, was gallantly willing to be of service.

Both he and Eleanor left the house next evening rather keen for the adventure, and Doctor Lowell, too, appeared more interested, as well as more doubtful of her success, than usual.

"Liberty Hall" on Rivington Street was a long, narrow, three-story brick structure, and the auditorium, reached by a steep flight of stairs, was on the second floor. Whatever expedient had been adopted in the way of advertising Doctor Lowell's proposed address, its success had been extraordinary. The place was jammed with men and women—mostly women—and the crowd were choking the aisles, no firemen or policemen—through some oversight—having been assigned there.

It was a typical audience of the district—Yiddish mostly, with a sprinkling, however, of Italians. They had been having a magic-lantern exhibition, which promptly ceased when Doctor Lowell ascended to the platform and was welcomed by the officer of the suffrage party who had induced her to appear.

The stage was in front of the building, the doors leading to the stairway being located at the side. Eleanor and Trent found the two seats that had been reserved for them on the aisle near the door and listened with faint amusement to the long harangue with which

the principal speaker was being introduced.

By the time Doctor Lowell arose to speak, the atmosphere in the closely packed hall was stifling, at least to Eleanor and Trent. The audience, however, did not seem to mind, while on the stage conditions were not so distressing, there being windows at the speaker's back, which had been opened at her request. But these were the only windows in the room. Doctor Lowell was speaking slowly and without her usual power, the character of the audience making necessary the employment of the simplest terms. It was hard for her and hard for Trent and Eleanor. At last the girl moved restlessly, and Trent turned to her with a smile.

"I wonder—I'm afraid," she whispered, leaning toward him, "that I can't stand any more of this. I feel as if I were being slowly poisoned. Don't you think we could get out in the air for a few minutes?"

By way of reply, Trent reached down for his hat and arose, placing his hand upon her arm. It was not a difficult matter for him to bore his way to the door, although in the process he noted a quick glance from the speaker. The rush of air in the vestibule was stimulating, and both stood for a moment drinking it in before going down the flight of narrow stairs to the door.

As they descended, Trent caught a dull, steady, pulsing sound outside, and when he opened the door leading to the sidewalk, they found the streets bathed in an unnatural light. There was an atmosphere of tenseness, too, and the sound which Trent had heard at the head of the stairs came to them with staccato insistence. It was easily to be recognized now as the pumping of fire engines. The street was filled with a pungent odor which smarted the nostrils, and as they stepped out onto the sidewalk, a little cloud of smoke swirled around a corner and swept past them.

"A fire!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I've always wanted to see a night fire. Let's go."

But Trent, deeply occupied with a sudden thought, led her across the street with the idea of locating the conflagration more exactly. Directly back of the building in which Doctor Lowell was speaking was a tall warehouse, overtopping the three-story structure by several stories. Tall and gaunt and gloomy, it rose into the night, its double line of blood-red windows glowering down upon the roof of the hall. Apparently the rear of the structure from which they had just emerged abutted upon the burning warehouse.

A picture of that crowded room came to Trent's mind, and he shuddered.

"You see that fire, Eleanor?" he said. "It's pretty close. Not dangerous," he added, as Eleanor started and looked at him with a face suddenly drawn, "at least so far as the fire is concerned. But—you know—"

"Yes, I know," replied Eleanor, calm now. "What can we do, Robert? We ought to do something."

"Certainly." Trent laughed with an assumption of lightness and led the way across the street to the door of the hall.

As they arrived, a man in a fireman's uniform came running up. He glanced at the two and stopped.

"What's going on up there, do you know?" He spoke sharply, then lowered his voice, explaining, "I'm Chief Fern's driver. Some one told him there was a big bunch up here."

"There is," replied Trent. "Mostly women. The place is packed to the aisles."

"No fireman on duty, is there?" barked the driver.

"Didn't see any," Trent returned. "We've got to get them out somehow."

"Out—yes!" The fireman moved impatiently. "The quicker, the better,

for," he added, "the first man or woman who smells smoke or hears the engines will let out a yell—and, then"—he shrugged—"good night!"

He started toward the door, but Trent laid a hand on his shoulder.

"As soon as they see you," he objected, "they'll catch on and rip everything apart."

The fireman paused.

"That's so. Well? What's your idea?"

"Miss Lowell and I will go in," said Trent quickly, "just as if everything were all right. She'll go up to the platform and have Doctor Lowell dismiss the crowd. I'll stand in the upstairs doorway and shunt the people through. You stand down at the street door and fire them out on their heads as soon as they come within reach. Get a policeman, if you can, because we don't want the sidewalk blocked any more than the stairway."

Eleanor had been watching him and listening dazedly. Now Trent, his eyes blazing, his face rigid, and every muscle tense—a very different man from the smiling, jaunty chap she had always known—turned to her.

"I spoke of your going up with me, but of course you mustn't," he said. "That would be too much of a risk. I can tend to the whole thing—"

She interrupted him with a little cry:

"You think I'm afraid!"

He turned to her, and each read something new in the eyes of the other—something elemental, something stern and indomitable. Without a word, his hand closed upon her arm in a hard grip. She grew rigid by his side, and thus erect, unfearing, the two went up the stairs and into the fetid room.

Doctor Lowell was speaking with greater vigor and apparently had struck a vein that appealed to the audience, for every man and woman was leaning forward, laughing. There was a general movement of heads as the door

opened and the two entered the room, and again Trent did not fail to note a rather impatient glance from the woman on the platform.

"You get around to the front of the stage," he whispered. "And—you might scribble a note explaining the situation to your aunt. Tell her it is imperative that she dismiss this audience at once by some expedient. Have you a pencil?" He took one from his pocket and handed it to her as the girl shook her head, and then an envelope from his coat pocket. "Write on this." He seized her hand. "Don't be afraid," he whispered. "You stick close to Doctor Lowell, and don't you dare to leave her side until I come."

She pressed his fingers by way of reply and moved slowly around to a position in front of the speaker's table, while Trent, with shoulders squared, stood with his hands on the doorknob. He had lost sight of the girl in the crowd, but he could see Doctor Lowell, and he watched her with straining eyes as the tense moments dragged by. Had Eleanor failed in the part assigned her?

It was in reality only a few minutes, however, before a look of annoyance crossed the speaker's face, and then, as Trent gazed at her eagerly, she stepped forward and bent down. He watched her as she straightened up and glanced hastily over the message. Then he saw her crumple the envelope in her hand, and resume her speech as if nothing had happened.

She went on for perhaps two minutes and then abruptly paused, her hands pressed to her forehead.

"Dear people," she said, "I find I must stop now. I have a bad headache." She pointed to her forehead. "You must go out—go out because I have a headache. I will come soon to talk to you again. Now, good night."

For a moment there was silence, and then, with startling suddenness, arose that shout of vocal applause with which

audiences of the district are wont to reward those who have pleased them. Then a movement began. Trent, looking toward the stage, could see that Eleanor had gained Doctor Lowell's side. The great woman was sipping water coolly from a glass, and both were looking down over the heads of the crowd at Trent. He turned slowly, and as he did so, the faintest suspicion of an odor of burning wood floated in. At the same time the swift chug-a-chug of the engines could be heard by those nearest the exit.

"All right!" Trent shouted. "Hurry and get on out now! Don't stand around! This isn't a movie show." He laughed aloud and slapped one bewiskered man on the back. "Come on now. People behind want to get out."

A babbling chorus of replies came. Doctor Lowell and her niece rejoiced to catch the note of joviality therein. It showed that Trent was dominating them, whether they knew it or not. They saw one man pause in the doorway and sniff the air—saw him throw his head back and open his mouth. Then there was a vicious half lurch of Trent's shoulders, a crippled, but none the less powerful, fist flashed to the man's jaw, and he sank to the floor, a dead weight.

CHAPTER X.

As the man lurched forward, Trent pushed him to one side so that he fell into a pocket which the crowd left as it turned around from the corner of the stage; he lay there practically unnoticed. Trent was standing on his tiptoes, looking over the heads of the men and women.

"Here—you big fellow back there!" he cried, scrambling up on a chair and pointing at a man who seemed in too much of a hurry. "Take your time! Some of you ladies grab him by the nose."

A titter went up from the women, a titter that rippled along through the crowd as the sally was repeated. Trent breathed more easily as he heard it, for his one idea was to keep the huddled mass of human beings moving freely through the door and down the stairs.

Once the thick, steadily moving procession halted. Trent, with an exclamation, was about to spring upon a chair again for a look over the heads of the people when a man pressed through to his elbow.

"It's all right, Jack," he said. "I'm a plain-clothes man from the Delancey Street station. I want to hand it to you."

Trent seized the husky policeman by the arm with a sigh of relief.

"Take the other side of the door, will you? Everything all right outside?"

"Sure," grunted the precinct detective, as he pushed back a group trying to gain the door ahead of their turn. "Now! Now! You people stop your pushin'! Quit crowdin', will you? Move on, there! I mean you!"

He struck out over the heads of the crowd at a woman who, having gained the doorsill, was looking about as if preparing to shout some message into the crowd. But she changed her mind when the detective's big hand shot toward her. The officer knew how to deal with these people.

"There's a couple of men from the house, below," he said to Trent, "pull-in' 'em out by the hair."

Within five minutes the press about the door was thinning, and Trent and the big policeman began to run the crowd out like sheep, until suddenly a gap showed at the head of the stairs, and the trick was turned. Even the man whom Trent had punched was lifted to his feet and shuffled out of the hall, holding a lame jaw in his hand.

As Trent turned to the stage, where Doctor Lowell and Eleanor still stood,

the girl ran swiftly down the steps and came to his side.

"Robert," she said, "you were wonderful!"

"Yes," Doctor Lowell, coming up at the moment, bore in with her rich contralto voice.

She was about to say more, but at that moment a group of stalwarts in rubber coats and helmets, headed by a captain and a battalion chief, on their way up to the roof, stopped and looked in at the doorway. One of the officers hurried to the rear and ran his hand along the floor and wall.

"It's coming in through here, chief," he called. "Everything's red hot."

The battalion chief promptly turned to the women.

"You'll have to get out of here," he said. "This place is going to burn in a minute."

Doctor Lowell turned to Trent as they reached the street and started for their cab.

"Robert," she said, "I want to thank you, not so much for what you did in saving a number of us from danger as for the opportunity you have afforded me of seeing man at his physical and mental best. You were a *man* to-night, Robert—a man of the sort I am never ashamed to bow to——" She broke off abruptly, and somehow Trent was glad. He was a little bit overwhelmed by what she had said. It was wonderful, coming from her.

"I suppose," said Doctor Lowell, turning to Eleanor, "you'd rather stay and see this fire than go home with me. No, I can't stay," she went on swiftly, reading Eleanor's thought. "I should like to extremely, but I must save myself as much as possible, these electioneering days. There isn't any reason, however, why you and Robert shouldn't stay. I'm perfectly capable of going home alone."

"Not while I'm about," asserted Trent. "I've still some old-fashioned

notions of gallantry that I don't think even you can ever knock out of me, Doctor Lowell."

The woman smiled grimly.

"Be sure I shan't try, Robert. And Eleanor?"

"Oh," laughed the girl, "I agree with Robert. In fact," she continued impulsively, "I think, to-night, I should agree to almost anything he——" She stopped suddenly, biting her lip.

Trent was assisting her aunt into the taxi. He turned quickly.

"Eleanor——"

She touched his shoulder quietly and spoke in a low voice.

"Not now, Robert, please."

He nodded, but as he helped her up to her seat beside Doctor Lowell, he retained her hand for a flashing instant, during which he swiftly pressed the gloved fingers to his lips. When he let it go, the hand fell naturally—was not drawn away. Had he felt a slight pressure of her fingers as he took them away from his lips?

"Robert," Eleanor said as they rode home, "that detective told me that if the crowd had once started to run, you would have been swept down the stairs and crushed to nothing. Did you realize that?"

"No." Trent shook his head.

"Robert Pinkham, you did, too!" Eleanor cried.

"What I have been thinking of," answered Trent, with feeling, "is that you were willing to go back into that place with me. I'll tell you, Doctor Lowell, she's the right stuff!"

Doctor Lowell exclaimed in humorous admonition:

"Come, come, children! As Doctor Johnson said, 'Let us have done with civilities,' or we shall all be quite unsettled. I'm proud of you both."

Eleanor put her arm through her aunt's and snuggled close to her, and thus they arrived at Gramercy Park.

Lowell was out, but Miss Judson

was seated before a pleasant open fire, her work laid aside, toasting marshmallows. They all took chairs before the fire and became quite merry, Doctor Lowell unbending to a degree which Trent would not have believed possible. Presently, however, she arose.

"I'm going to my room," she said. "I've a pernicious habit of reading in bed."

"Oh, don't go," said Trent, rising.

The doctor accepted this as a bit of politeness that did not call for a reply and glanced significantly at Miss Judson, who picked up her work and followed her sister out of the room.

The logs were crumbling to ashes when Trent finally arose to go. The light from the hearth rested on Eleanor's face and hair, and Trent sensed that subtle suggestion of perfume which he always seemed to feel rather than smell when he was near her. And he was filled with yearning to take her hands, clasped about her knee, and draw her to him and hold her close. He wanted to feel that gleaming hair against his cheek. He wanted to possess her now and forever more.

But—the irony of it!—he couldn't. His hands were tied with bonds of his own making. In her eyes he was not himself, but another man. How beautiful everything now might have been had he yielded early to the impulse to avow his real identity! She would have been angry, of course, but he could have won her around. As the case stood now, she was filled with his lies, and he dared not enlighten her.

And Doctor Lowell—what would she say? He did not have to stretch his imagination to picture her attitude. No, the path toward which both he and Eleanor inclined was closed, and any action on his part now in the way of affirming his love and asking for hers would, as Doctor Lowell had said, be criminal. He would have to take her with her eyes open or not at all.

His face had a haunted look as he arose. Eleanor, who had been sitting with eyes steadfastly fixed upon the dying ashes while Trent had struggled with himself, arose, too. She did not meet his eyes with her usual level gaze.

"Good night, Robert."

He fancied that there was a tinge of sadness in her voice. He took her hand, drew it slowly toward his lips, and was bending over it when suddenly he let it fall heavily and straightened.

"Good night, Eleanor, girl," he murmured; then, turning abruptly, he left the room.

At his home, later, he sat smoking in the library as the clock struck one and two. He could see that a crisis had come. He had run his course. From now on the translation of the alleged Pinkham—what a name!—to the real Trent must be brought about. But how? His structure of duplicity, he recognized with a sinking heart, must be removed, stone by stone. What he had reared was too strongly built to admit of instantaneous wrecking.

Then there was Caleb Lowell, scowling or grinning—always avaricious. Things had been happening in the Raritan pool, and the fellow had been inclined to snap and snarl a bit of late.

At length, utterly weary, Trent gave up, lay back, and fell asleep in his chair—where the butler, in the small hours, found him and awoke him and sent him off to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

When he arose and dressed the next morning, after tossing restlessly for hours in his bed, he was as much in the dark as ever as to how to extricate himself from his present predicament. He bathed and dressed in a vacant, perfunctory manner, ate a light breakfast without appetite, and went downtown. Elwell was in Detroit on business, and the clerks were just beginning their daily labors. Trent hurried to his desk,

hopeful that the mail would contain something sufficiently engrossing to enable him to work out of his hopeless mood and take a fresh start, but there was nothing of an unusual or interesting nature. Trent was beginning to tap the desk in despair when a boy brought in the name of Caleb Lowell.

Ordinarily Trent would have frowned, but now, somehow or other, he was glad to have him in. Perhaps he might find in Lowell a way out of his dilemma; the old chap was as easy to buy as a yard of calico. Since he had learned of the man's underhand dealings with Oliphant, Trent had little patience with him and had been inclined to resent his complaints and snarls over current market conditions—had, indeed, been rather tempted at times to end his tyranny by bidding him defiance and taking his chances with Eleanor and Doctor Lowell. But now the young man was glad of his forbearance, for he wanted advice.

As luck would have it, his father recently had let fall something which he had thought would prove of value to his son, and Trent, as he awaited the appearance of Eleanor's uncle, decided to pass it along and reap what reward he could from the man's gratitude.

Lowell came in with his usual gliding gait and rubbing of hands, but with an underlying gleam of malice in his eyes.

"Well, Bobbie," he began—he had lately assumed the prerogative of addressing Trent thus—"you may not know it, but you've been pretty offish lately."

"Unintentional, Lowell, I assure you," smiled Trent, pushing a box of cigarettes toward him. "I've been pretty much occupied."

"Yes," grumbled the man, "and meanwhile I've been getting into all sorts of scrapes. I had an idea we might do something together—I with my experience and you with your—

with your exceptional strategic position."

He paused, while Trent, somber as was his mood, suppressed a laugh with difficulty. But he answered gravely.

"There is something in that. But—well, just now, you know—"

Lowell held up his hand.

"Tut! Tut! I understand. It wasn't so many years ago that I was young, and yet—well, I've been trying to do my part in this thing."

"Have you? Well, so have I," Trent cut in. "Have you thought anything about buying Aluminum common lately?"

"Ah!" Lowell's breath drew inward with a whistle. "Aluminum common, eh? So those rumors are true? What?"

Trent nodded. Then he leaned forward.

"Now see here, Lowell, I want to ask you something."

The visitor settled in his chair.

"Fire away, Bobbie."

"It's just this," opened Trent, fixing the man with his eyes. "You are Eleanor's uncle and know her pretty well. As far as I am concerned, I guess you understand pretty well how I feel toward her—"

Caleb Lowell interrupted by a preliminary clearing of his throat.

"I grasp your drift, I think," he said. "I can tell you that my niece is extremely fond of you."

"Is she so fond of me," persisted Trent, "that when she knows I am not Robert Pinkham, she will stand the shock?"

The older man looked at him quizzically for a moment and then threw back his head and laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" Trent flushed darkly.

"Now, now!" Lowell's hands went out soothingly as Trent half arose. "I was laughing at your modesty. Here you are, Robert Trent, the son of Horatio Trent, and you ask me whether

my niece will be sorry when she knows that fact—knows that you are not one of those damned Pinkhams. Pardon me, Bobbie, but that's funny. It's a joke."

"You mean that fact will help me with her?"

Lowell laughed again immoderately, and asked Trent what else, by any possibility, he could mean.

"And your wife—Doctor Lowell?" persisted Trent.

Lowell's face sobered.

"Well, now, that's a bit different," he replied. "She'll be vexed. Vexed!" His face gave hint that he was employing a comparatively inadequate expression. "Nevertheless, it's Eleanor and you who are interested, and as Eleanor has been brought up to have a mind of her own, I think you'll see my wife reaping all the rewards that accrue therefrom when you decide to announce yourself. In other words, it won't matter much how she takes it."

Trent left his chair with the step of a man from whose shoulders a load has fallen. He felt like hugging Lowell, hugging anything—the office boy or the iron pillar in the outer office.

"Of course, Lowell," he said, "you'll say nothing about this. You'll leave it all to me, won't you?"

"Certainly, certainly."

Eleanor's uncle picked up his hat and breezed out of the office, glancing at the clerks, as he went, with the air and bearing of their future overlord.

As for Trent, even the suggestion thrown out by Lowell that Eleanor would be absolutely swayed by his name and wealth did not serve to temper his exaltation. He wanted her, and he did not care what swayed her. Anyway, he had satisfactory evidence that she already cared for him. In good time he would delicately maneuver the matter of enlightenment. Some way would occur to him.

Thoughts such as these served to lessen the great strain under which he had been laboring; so much so, indeed, that he was content for a while to let the days slide along and to await some chance thought or event that would give him a hint as to the proper method of opening his campaign of enlightenment. Occasionally he had lapses wherein he forgot that anything save his courtship of Eleanor remained to be done.

These periods might have occurred more frequently had it not been for Caleb Lowell, whose persistent "When are you going to make the break?" coupled with requests for advice as to certain of his affairs in Wall Street, which were not proceeding altogether to his liking, kept Trent from the full enjoyment of his relations with the Lowell family.

Indeed, as the weeks went on, some of Lowell's requests merged pretty closely upon demands. This oppressed Trent, who was a young man with not a little fighting spirit and a just appreciation of his independence. Nevertheless, it was a part of the price he was paying, and the return was well worth everything.

The weeks went by. Doctor Lowell had the supreme satisfaction of the suffrage triumph in the State election, while Trent and Elwell did a pretty bit of work with a bond issue in which the elder Trent was interested. This pleased the great man hugely, and he forbore to inquire too closely into his son's progress in the Caleb Lowell mining-stock affair; thereby confirming Trent's suspicion that he was not the only one watching the man in the interest of the Consolidated Fuel Company.

His mother, too, evidently thinking—if she thought about the matter at all—that the less the flames of romance are fanned by interference, the sooner they die out, had never again referred

to his relations with the girl she had seen him escorting down Fifth Avenue.

Yet there were worries, deep worries—all concentrated fatefully enough in and about Eleanor Lowell and their relations one with the other. There was, for instance, a wonderful Saturday when they motored to Bear Mountain, Trent driving his swift roadster and Eleanor at his side. Arriving home in the evening, he stood with her at her doorstep saying one of those good-bys which had shown in the past few weeks such a tendency toward prolongation.

"Robert," she said in a low voice, "it has been a gorgeous time—perfectly wonderful." She paused. "I wonder if you realize—just—just how happy I've been."

Trent bent over her hand.

"Can you think of anything that would have made you happier?" he asked.

She gazed at him doubtfully.

"I don't know." She smiled. "Can you suggest anything?"

"I wonder," returned Trent gently. She hesitated a moment.

"Some time, Robert, when you think—you-know—" She stopped abruptly and her voice changed. "Good night, Robert. I really must go."

When he looked up, she was gone.

He drove slowly away and, later, at the club, spent another sleepless night.

CHAPTER XII.

The sunlight of a vivid day in early December was pouring in through the windows of the Lowell library. It was getting on toward eleven o'clock and Minna, the maid, was dusting and setting the books and magazines in orderly array on the table. The telephone bell sounded, and the girl, picking up the receiver, without even waiting for the usual introductory formula, announced that Doctor Lowell was not in.

As she turned from the instrument, Caleb Lowell entered the room with nervous haste, removing his hat and overcoat as he walked.

"Was that call for me?" he asked.

"No, sir."

The maid continued stolidly to ply her duster without even a glance at her master, who seated himself at the telephone in time to catch the full benefit of a cloud of dust which was wafted over the desk. He sneezed lustily.

"Damn!" He sneezed again and once again. "Is this the time for dusting, Minna?" He spoke over his shoulder, taking off the receiver as he did so. "Hello! I want 44500 Broad." Again he sneezed. Turning about, with the receiver at his ear, he glared at the maid. "I asked you," he fumed, "whether this was the time for dusting!"

"Ay don't know, sir," returned the imperturbable maid.

"You don't— Yes, I'm waiting for 44500 Broad, central. You don't know, what?"

"Ay dusts whenever der ban dust to dust," replied Minna.

"Ha!" Lowell laughed ironically. "Whenever there is dust to dust! By George, I believe you!" He bent suddenly forward. "Hello! Is this Trent, Elwell & Co.? Eh? There's a call for this number? Well, what the — Hello? No, Doctor Lowell is not in. Now get off, please! This is a busy wire."

As the voice continued, he slammed the receiver on the hook and sat back. The bell jingled, and Lowell placed the apparatus to his ear.

"Is this Trent, El—" His face grew livid. "Who?— No, Doctor Lowell is not in! No, I don't know when she will be in, and I don't care a—care—a—"

Again he slammed down the receiver, throwing himself back in his chair, his hands pressed to his forehead.

head in an ecstasy of irritation. As he did so, Minna, who had been observing him with dull, bovine stare, swept a glass vase from the table, which fell to the floor with a crash and shattered directly behind him. A dynamite bomb could not more effectually have lifted him to his feet.

"Eh? Eh?" he cried, staring dazedly about. His eyes located the broken pieces of glass, and he was on the point of commenting upon them when the sound of the telephone turned his thoughts.

"Hello, hello! Trent, El—" With a sudden outcry, he cast the telephone to the floor and shook his fist at it. "Go to the devil!" he snarled. He swung upon the girl, "This house is hell! Tell your mistress I said so!" He strode to the door and turned. "I'm going out to see if I can find a telephone I can use!" And he stamped out.

As he disappeared, Miss Judson hurried into the room, her mild face perturbed.

"Minna, what was that frightful crash?" Minna arose from the floor with fragments of the vase in her hands, and the good woman nodded and sighed. "Dear! Dear! What a house!"

She walked over and picked up the telephone, replaced the receiver, and, seeking a chair by the window in the sunlight—she had a faculty for warm nooks that was positively feline—took up her work, while Minna departed with the broken vase.

Eleanor entered presently fresh from the street, cheeks flaming, eyes sparkling. She had just come from her tea room—she and Trent having selected a site for her venture a week or two before—and was in radiant spirits.

"Oh, Aunt Matilda," she said excitedly, "it's going to be the dearest, coziest place! I'm sure it's going to be popular and that I'll make oceans of money—"

The telephone broke in and Eleanor answered the summons. It was Trent.

"Robert!" She laughed. "No, you can't. No. Don't you dare, Robert. I'm going out. No, I—" She turned from the desk. "Did you ever know such a man? He coolly informed me he was coming for lunch and then rang off."

"He is truly ardent," smiled her aunt.

"I don't want him to be ardent," Eleanor retorted.

Miss Judson regarded her sharply and then arose and walked over to her.

"You do want him to be, daughter. That is the most transparent—"

"Not at all," interrupted the girl, somewhat weakly, it must be confessed.

"I have my own way to make in the 'battle of my sex.'"

"Battle of fiddlesticks!" Miss Judson took her by the arm and shook her gently. "Why, I fancied of late you were coming to your senses as to all this nonsense!"

"Why, what do you mean, Aunt Matilda?"

"Just what I say," returned the woman. "Some women are set apart for so-called sex battles—women like my sister—"

"That's just it," Eleanor replied.

"Aunt Julia is trying to convince the majority of women that they should take a certain amount of intelligent interest in affairs concerning our national life—" She stopped, laughing. "But I'm not going to argue with you. I leave that to Aunt Julia. Just at present I have a tea room and Robert on my hands."

"Then keep them," rejoined Miss Judson. "If love ever comes to you—and I think it has come; oh, yes, I do, Eleanor—why, cherish it as a priceless gift." She put her hands on the girl's shoulder. "Think seriously, my daughter, before it is too late. The years have been very long since I cast my lot—thoughtlessly. I—I—"

She kissed Eleanor gently and turned away. The girl watched her a moment in silence, then advanced softly and kissed her and went out.

"Well, Matilda!" The hearty voice of Doctor Lowell startled the woman from the reverie into which she had fallen. "Have you seen Eleanor?" She glanced at the clock. "Tsch, Tsch! Nearly twelve o'clock, and I'm to speak at a luncheon at the Llewellyn——" She rummaged through her desk. "Now, where did I put my remarks?" She looked about. "They were in a blue envelope."

"Do you remember where you put them?" asked her sister, rising to assist in the search.

Doctor Lowell glanced at her sharply.

"If I did, Matilda, I should know where to find them." She bent over a desk drawer. "Now, isn't that exasperating?"

As the papers flew from her desk above her head in a veritable snow-storm, the maid entered with word that the cook said the luncheon had not arrived.

"Bother!" The great woman stared at the girl. "Now I recall I neglected to order anything. Well, I can't stop now. Tell Bridget to knock something together. There must be things in the kitchen."

As the maid departed, Miss Judson picked up her sister's bag and opened it, pointing to the projecting end of a roll of manuscript, which Doctor Lowell seized with an exclamation.

"Of course! How stupid of me! Thank you so much, Matilda. By the way, will you step down into the kitchen and see about luncheon? You might see about dinner, too."

A few minutes later, as Doctor Lowell opened the front door, she encountered her husband, bound in.

"Ah, here you are, Julia!" he cried. "I must speak to you."

The doctor paused impatiently.

"You'll have to wait until this afternoon, Caleb. I'm in a hurry."

"I can't wait!" snapped Lowell. "Julia, I want a check for five thousand dollars at once. It's important."

"Oh, you do!" Doctor Lowell regarded him judicially. "Caleb, you've been trying your best to go through your money for years. Now you have succeeded, you shan't go through mine. I think I do quite enough in paying for the running of this house."

"I haven't gone through my money," he rejoined. "It's tied up in a big movement. I must have five thousand dollars to protect my interest in the enterprise. Now, Julia, be sensible."

"You and your enterprises!" She laughed derisively.

He swept on hastily.

"I tell you I've got to put up five thousand dollars margin by three o'clock——"

His wife nodded comprehendingly.

"Margins! I see! You've been putting ice in the fire to watch it melt. But none of mine, thank you!"

She pushed him aside and went out.

"For a week, Julia," he called after her. "I'll give it back with interest."

"Not for ten minutes," was the inexorable reply.

"Jezebel!" Lowell stood gazing at her retreating figure and then slammed into the house.

He had just seated himself at the telephone when Trent entered gayly.

"Hello, Lowell!" he said, advancing and tapping him on the shoulder.

The man sprang to his feet.

"I've been trying to get you all morning." His face was dark and scowling. "Don't you ever attend to business?"

Trent shrugged good-humoredly.

"Sometimes—when there is any. A broker's office in these days of strife, Lowell, is the nearest approach to a rest cure I know. If anything went up a point, every ticker in Wall Street

would break down under the unwonted strain."

Lowell came close to him.

"That is exactly what I want to speak to you about. I've got to put up five thousand dollars margin on Aluminum common before the exchange closes, and I haven't the cash available."

"You'll need more than five thousand before Aluminum is through," advised Trent. "Why don't you pocket your loss and get out of the market—and stay out?"

"Why, you told me to buy Aluminum," cried Lowell.

"That was a mistake," replied Trent. "We're all of us liable."

Lowell shook an angry finger at the speaker.

"And you told me not to be a bear on Raritan! I joined the bull movement. Look where I am there!"

"I didn't tell you to bull Raritan. I told you my father did not take me into his confidence."

"Yes, you blockhead, but you advised me not to be a bear! Didn't you?"

At the word "blockhead," a slow flush appeared just under Trent's cheek bones. He replied quietly, though.

"I was merely giving you my personal opinion."

Lowell fairly roared.

"Yah! Your personal opinion! Your pers— Do you think I cared a tinker's dam for your personal opinion?"

"You asked for it," returned Trent, with a little sharp note in his voice. "I thought it funny that you should. I never doped the market right in my life—"

"Why, you young fool! You lunatic!" Lowell was pacing up and down the room. "I wanted your *father's* opinion! I supposed he had sufficient confidence in you to warrant his giving you some intimation of the situation!"

"Do you really suppose I would have violated his confidence if he had?"

Trent had got past the limit of his usual discretion.

"All I know is," fumed Lowell, "that thanks to your mutton head—"

Trent started forward.

"Look here, Lowell! Drop that, do you hear me?"

Lowell's angry gaze wavered.

"What I want from you, Trent," he said, "is five thousand dollars—and I want it quick!"

"Don't make me laugh," answered Trent, biting off each word.

"I want five thousand—" Lowell suddenly lowered his voice. "Do you think, Trent, I don't know what you've been up to in this house? Do you think I haven't learned that your father is interested in the Consolidated Fuel Company—that they have had engineers investigating the Western Colorado Fuel Company, and that they know it will pay to work it? Do you think I don't know your father has been gunning for that half interest I hold, and that he had you here as a spy to keep in touch with me? Eh? Do you think I'm asleep?"

As Trent stared at him dazedly, Lowell laughed and swept on.

"Now, then, put your cards on the table. I'm your man, when you come to talk business. But I won't hear a word until I get a check for five thousand dollars. Come on now." He moved toward the desk. "Here is a blank check, and I want you to sign it, quickly, see?"

"I don't lend my money to a double-crosser," said Trent heatedly.

"Oh!" Lowell laughed bitterly. "So that's the play! Very well, I'll let your father know how much of a business man you are—and—and I'll raise my price a notch, too, just for that."

"Raise what you want!" Only get out of here!" exclaimed Trent, who was now seeing red. "Get out, I say!" He moved forward menacingly. "I came here to see Eleanor."

Lowell paused at the door.

"Oh, I'll get out of my own library—just for a few minutes," he jeered. "I'm going to my study to get that deed of trust, and when I come back, I'll have something to say to you and Eleanor! You young sneak! Don't go, please. Make yourself at home with my niece. I'll be back directly."

Trent, so thoroughly aroused as to be speechless, glared after the man, his fingers opening and closing convulsively, more than half tempted to seize and maul him, until he had shaken out of him an apology for every epithet he had uttered. Never in his life had he been compelled to stand and take such abuse, and he burned with shame as well as with anger. But he would have to control himself for the present at least, and pave the way as best he could for the *dénouement* of this romantic episode. He walked to a table and had just lighted a cigarette when Eleanor entered.

CHAPTER XIII.

Eleanor came toward him with a painful frown.

"So, sir, you decided to disobey me!"

Trent moved awkwardly and then forced a laugh, not replying. She looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter, Robert? I'm not serious. I really am glad to see you. I've been at the tea room all morning and want to talk with you about it. It—everything is just about ready. I've stocked it and hired a waitress and a cook. I'm really getting nervous with it all. It's so—so tremendous."

"You need a business partner," replied Trent, succeeding in his effort to summon his usual mood. "Mayn't I be your partner, Eleanor?"

"Don't joke, please." She regarded him with serious eyes. "I've spent so much money and involved myself for so much more that I'm frightened."

Trent moved to her side.

"Eleanor," he said, "I want to be serious, too."

A little shyly, she waited for him to go on.

"Eleanor," he continued, "you must know that I love you. You must know that—that—I—care for you as I never thought I could care—for any-girl."

"Yes," she returned, nodding. "I—I think I do know that. I hope you do. For—oh, Robert, I *do* care for you! I—I—dearest, I love you, too—love you so hard that it hurts me, frightens me—" She abandoned herself utterly, swaying toward him so that he took her in his arms.

He tried to speak, but for a moment words failed him. He cleared his throat.

"Eleanor, 'sweetheart,'" he faltered, "do you care for me so much that—that you don't care who or what I am?"

"I love you for what you *are*," she replied, leaning back her head and gazing full into his eyes.

"Listen, Eleanor," Trent said in low, even tones, "I am not Robert Pinkham at all. I am Robert Trent. Your uncle has known all along who I am. He knows that Pinkham was—married last fall and that I—took his place because I loved you from the first minute I saw you."

She laughed at him.

"You're such a tease, even in the most serious moments!"

"I'm serious, Eleanor." He smiled weakly. "Your uncle knew that first night that I was the son of Horatio Trent. Now he wants to use those securities of your father's. I loved you and wanted to be near you—"

With a sharp, hurt cry, she broke away from him.

"You are serious! How long has my uncle known? Oh, you said always! Why—then—why has he pretended—" Struck with a new thought she came close to him. "Why have you done this? What excuse had

you? And my uncle——" She paused and then added in a low voice: "What have you two been up to?"

"Eleanor, I love you!"

She waved him away.

"My uncle knew all this, too!" She seemed dazed, bewildered. She pressed her hands to her forehead as if trying to clear her mind.

"Yes, your uncle knew this!" Caleb Lowell strode into the room with a bundle of papers in his hand, shaking his head at Trent. "This scoundrel badgered me into compliance with his demand that I appear to be hoodwinked. Yes, he did!" he shouted, catching an incredulous look on Eleanor's face. "And why did he do it? Why?" He placed the hand holding his papers to his breast and raised the other aloft. "Why?" His voice ended in a squeak. "Well, I've found out!"

Eleanor turned to her uncle and stamped her foot.

"Be still, please!" She faced Trent. "Why did you do this cruel thing, Robert?"

Trent, watching every play of her face, advanced a step toward her.

"Why? I'll tell you why, Eleanor. My father wanted me to see you and find out whether you were going to marry Robert Pinkham. Just for a joke, I called and gave my name as Pinkham. When I saw you, I knew I had found the girl I could really worship. I couldn't resist the impulse to—to——"

Her face cleared a trifle.

"To make me love you anyway?" she supplied. What more she would have said will never be known, for at the moment her uncle broke in with a loud voice.

"He lies!" he almost screamed. "I didn't know it, and I was fooled, too, by his romantic gush, but now I know! His father is head of the Consolidated Fuel Company, which bought Pinkham's interest in your father's mining

company. They have discovered the property is still rich, and he set Trent to work to win your love and then get hold of your father's half interest. That's why he was in this house! But that interest is mine, and when he found it out, he got me tied up in the market so I would sell that stock to the Fuel Trust!"

"That wasn't my motive at all!" cried Trent. "You'll believe me, won't you, Eleanor? Eleanor?"

She was staring at him.

"And, yes, I remember," she said in a distant voice, "you told me you were going to try to see if you couldn't find some flaw in that trust deed, so you could get the stocks away from Uncle Caleb——"

"To give them to you!" Trent broke in. "Eleanor, my every intention was honest and legitimate!"

She laughed bitterly.

"Legitimate!"

"Yes, legitimate. All I wanted was your love—nothing else. Every day I've known you has been a beautiful dream. Every——"

Something in her face stopped him.

"Uncle," she said, turning to Lowell, "this is your house. Why don't you ask him to go?"

"Eleanor!" Trent put out his hand pleadingly, but she turned her back, sobbing. "So," she said, swinging upon her uncle, "you have won your valuable stocks!"

Lowell was rubbing his hands.

"It appears so, Eleanor; it certainly does. Robert Pinkham has married. Of that I have legal evidence."

"Eleanor, there is something rotten here——"

The girl, hearing Trent's voice, stared at him a moment in silence. Then, turning to her uncle:

"Why haven't you asked him to leave?" She paused and then hurried on impulsively, hysterically. "But you

needn't bother. I am going to leave myself, this instant!"

"Now, now, Eleanor!" Lowell placed his hand upon her arm. "You know this home is yours always."

She sprang away from him.

"Take your hand away from me, please! I'd sooner die than pass another hour under the same roof with you! You have the securities. Keep them, if they'll do you any good! I trust you'll make a profitable—oh, a *most* profitable deal with Mr.—Mr. Trent!" She walked to the door and stood at the threshold looking back. "I am going, for good." As Trent started to follow her, she pointed at him. "If you attempt to follow me out of this house, I'll call the first policeman I meet!"

"Policeman!" Trent's face turned white and he stood rooted to the spot.

Thus, leaving the young man standing rigid and Lowell rubbing his hands and smiling in rather a doubtful manner, Eleanor went down the hall and the front door slammed behind her.

As this happened, Miss Judson hurried in from the other door, summoned thither by the loud voices.

"What *is* the matter?" She stared blankly at the two men. "You act as if you were about to fly at each other's throats! Where is Eleanor? I thought I heard her."

Trent moved somberly toward the door.

"Let him tell you, if he wants. As for me— Well, it's all over, Miss Judson. Eleanor's gone."

"Gone! Gone where?" The good creature's eyes, ever ready for weeping, filled with tears. "I—" The front door slammed again and all turned. "Oh, she's coming back—"

But it wasn't Eleanor. It was Doctor Lowell.

"Why, Julia!" quavered Miss Judson, the first of the trio to find tongue. "I thought you were at a meeting."

Doctor Lowell tossed her head.

"I made a stupid mistake. The meeting is to-morrow." She threw down her bag and glanced first at Trent and then at her husband. "Well," she frowned, being in rather an unenviable humor, "what's the matter?"

Trent faced her.

"Doctor Lowell, I wish to have a talk with you alone. I am not Robert Pinkham. I never was—I mean, I am—"

"An impostor!" squeaked Lowell.

"Well, I do declare!" Miss Judson raised her eyes and hands heavenward.

Doctor Lowell ignored her husband and fixed her eyes upon the hapless young man. But when she spoke, her words were far from being the verbal earthquake against which Trent had braced himself.

"I have expected you to tell me this some time, Robert," she said. "But why choose this occasion, when you must see I am upset?"

"You had expected—" faltered Trent. "You mean you—"

"I mean that I knew—most assuredly. I'm not quite an idiot, although I may appeal to you as one." She smiled. "You are Robert Trent, son of Horatio Trent, who is one of our malefactors, so called, of great wealth."

"But, Julia!" exclaimed her sister. "Why have you not told this before?"

"Yes, why?" snarled Lowell.

"For various reasons," replied Doctor Lowell composedly. "I discovered the deception very quickly. My suspicions were aroused by Robert's blundering answers to my questions."

"But you haven't told why you did not tell us," persisted her sister. "I declare—"

"Now, Matilda," admonished the protagonist of this little scene, "don't go on, please! I investigated Mr. Trent quite thoroughly and found he stood assay. My dear sister, any one with the slightest knowledge of human na-

ture would know that Eleanor was bound to fall in love with some one sooner or later. I decided it might as well be Robert Trent as any one—in fact, in many ways I think he is quite ideal. He loves her and his romance and devotion have been quite appealing. Another reason—I like Robert Trent."

"Doctor Lowell!" Trent moved to her side and caught her hand, his face beaming affection and admiration.

She smiled grimly.

"Where's Eleanor?" she asked.

"She—she," stammered Lowell, "she has gone out."

Trent glared at the man, still retaining his grasp of Doctor Lowell's capable hand.

"Why don't you tell her all? Doctor Lowell, she has left this house for good."

Doctor Lowell looked up with a start and fastened her gaze upon her husband.

"Your husband was hard pressed to put up some margins. He knew who I was all the time. He tried to blackmail me for five thousand dollars, and I wouldn't be blackmailed. Then he fixed up a story that I was trying to bribe him for my father——"

"It's true!" cried Lowell.

"Silence!" Doctor Lowell turned to Trent. "Go on, Robert."

"He told Eleanor that I was in the house as a spy for my father, trying to get those stocks for him. He told Eleanor I had been fooling and playing with her for this purpose. She went off her head and threw me over—said her uncle could have the stocks, but she wouldn't stay in the same house with him."

"Oh, dear!" Miss Judson started for the door on a run.

"Matilda!" Her sister's voice shot after her and brought her to a halt. "Matilda, come in here and sit down and behave yourself!"

Miss Judson obeyed with meek promptitude, and the doctor waved at her husband.

"Now, sir, what have you to say?"

"I have this to say," began her husband, striding forward and tugging at his sparse side whiskers. "By the terms of the trust deed made out by Adrian Lowell, I am entitled to his half interest in the Lowell-Pinkham mine. Robert Pinkham is married——"

"I understand all that," interpolated his wife.

"Then," snapped Lowell, "you understand all that is necessary for you to know."

"Indeed!" Doctor Lowell's head went up into the air several degrees above normal. "Don't be quite so certain as to that!"

"That interest is rightfully mine, and I want it at once."

"Ump! So!" Doctor Lowell nodded. "I can appreciate your attitude, Caleb. But we shall proceed a trifle more deliberately than that—a trifle more deliberately. We don't rush these matters at express speed, even if you are in need of collateral for loans." She walked to the table and stood there judicially. "I am a lawyer, a member of the bar of this State, and I propose to sift this matter quite thoroughly—quite thoroughly, my husband. I have long felt that it needed sifting."

Lowell fumed.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" he cried. "I'll be damned if you will! You attend to your own affairs, Julia Lowell!"

"Caleb!" She bore down upon him like a frigate under full sail. "Caleb Lowell, how dare you? Answer me! How dare you?" As Lowell retreated, she reached out her hand. "That is the trust deed, is it not? Let me have it."

He thrust it toward her.

"Yes, take it," he agreed. "Take it and read it, and we'll end this nonsense."

She took it and, moving to a chair at the head of the table, seated herself with dignity, while the rest gathered about her as lawyers about a judge when a knotty legal point is under discussion.

"We will go over this very carefully," she said, glancing hastily over the document. "I note some stipulations as to the conduct of your stewardship of Eleanor's affairs."

"You will not read this until I have my lawyer present!" interrupted her husband, seized with a sudden thought, or a sudden fear, Trent could not tell which.

"I shall read it—now." She frowned. "I am all the lawyer that is needed for the present."

As she adjusted her glasses, Trent and Miss Judson, who had been whispering, moved toward the door. She noted the movement and looked over the top of the document at them.

"Just one moment, please." She spoke sharply. "I wish it distinctly to be understood that no one must seek Eleanor until I say so. She has elected to leave this house in a passion, without sufficient common sense or confidence in me to submit the matter. If I am to help her, if she is to profit by her lesson, she must be left absolutely alone—by you, Matilda. I want your word of honor. I forbid you to attempt to go near her. And you, sir," turning to Trent, "if you have any hope of carrying on your suit with my niece—and I cannot say to you that you have—you'll be guided absolutely by my advice. Let her lie a while in the bed she has made until she sees what she has done. It won't hurt her. She'll live at the Women's University Club and may be found any day at her tea room—until it blows up or she becomes tired of it." She took up the trust deed. "Now, then, are you all listening? Robert?"

"Yes, Doctor Lowell," very meekly.

"Matilda?"

"Yes, sister."

"Caleb?"

"Yah!"

"Very well, then."

She cleared her throat and began to read the terms of the deed.

CHAPTER XIV.

Doctor Lowell ran so rapidly over the various stipulations that it was difficult for her hearers to follow, much less to understand them clearly. But as her manner indicated enlightenment, neither Trent nor Miss Judson felt it incumbent upon them to interrupt. At length, having mumbled through the document, she laid it on the table at her side.

"Well." She gave the word an inflection that might have meant anything.

"Well," joined in Lowell, "I see no reason to fool here any longer. The deed is perfectly clear, and I don't mean to be bullied another minute."

"Yes." His wife nodded affirmatively. "Perfectly clear. No one will attempt to bully you, Caleb. This is merely a matter of business. I represent Eleanor, and I shall protect her interests to the last dot—mind that—to the last dot! Remember, the first thing you have to do is to give my niece a month's written notice that you intend to avail yourself of the provisions of this deed"—she tapped the paper—"and convince me—or a jury, as you please—that your trusteeship has been so conducted as to enable you to become beneficiary. I shall wait for this until the expiration of the four weeks' notice of possession, which I presume you will send to Eleanor to-day."

She arose, not neglecting to possess herself of the deed.

"And I warn you, Caleb, that any attempt on your part to evade what I've asked you to do will result in my mak-

ing it impossible for you to pass another day under this roof. Do you understand?"

She walked to the door and there paused, beckoning to Trent, who joined her in the hall.

"Robert," she ordered, "take down these numbers of stock certificates." She read off a long series which Trent noted down. "These," she explained, "are the numbers of the stock certificates comprising my late brother-in-law's holdings in the Western Colorado Fuel Company. I want you to see if by any chance one or more of these have passed out of my husband's possession. This is very important. You have a month in which to ascertain."

Trent, who, as said, had been unable to catch much of her rapid recital of the terms of the trust deed was not in a position to judge as to the importance of his assignment, but was quite willing to take her word for it. In the meantime, he would seek his father's permission to place her in possession of the fact of the sale of several of the shares to James Oliphant. Horatio Trent, by the way, was in Colorado, intent, the young man suspected, upon fuel company as well as railroad matters. As he nodded, she placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"Now, boy, I know this is going to be hard for you, but I want you to let my niece strictly alone until I say you may see her. I know her better than you do. I'm speaking in your interest as well as hers. Let her run this thing out. It's the only way. If she cares for you deeply—as I may say I hope she does—she is not the girl who will cease to care in the end. Time will tell as to that. You have to accept that chance. If you presume now, or next week, or the week after——"

"And the week after that?" Trent looked at her pathetically.

"We'll see," she replied, and nodded her dismissal.

The next day Trent gritted his teeth and went West, following his father, who had been in Denver a week and had written suggesting the need of his son's companionship, if not assistance. Before he went, however, fearing that panic at the desperate financial straits in which he had become involved would prove more potent in its effect upon Caleb Lowell than his fear of his wife—thus leading him to some other desperate act involving the fuel-company stock—Trent arranged through Tommy Elwell that the man should be tided over the crisis in his affairs. This he accomplished without appearing as a direct factor in the case, although he was willing to allow Lowell to suspect what he pleased.

Eleanor, meanwhile—as her aunt had prophesied—was fully occupied with her tea room. At times she thought of the home she had left, but generally with resentment and wonder that her aunt had not followed her and argued her back to reason. She loved the doctor dearly, regarded her in every way as a mother, and had confidently expected that after a day or two the good woman would visit her at the scene of her labors and firmly, but gently take her back home. She would have welcomed this, for she felt very much alone and at times more than a little forlorn.

She needed the advice of a woman of her aunt's bright and acute mind, and she missed, too, Trent's crisp and businesslike suggestions. This, it must be confessed, was about the only way she missed that devoted young man at first. And when the other feeling came, she suppressed it and drove it from her mind; for he had tricked her, made a fool of her, been a traitor to her simply to gain an end for his father.

Yet he had held an appeal to which, after a struggle, she had been ready to yield whole-heartedly. She admitted this freely, although it served at times

only to make her furiously indignant that she should have been so weak as to have fallen into the net he had spread. Knowledge of the fact that at bottom she had not yet escaped all the meshes of that net accentuated the bitter feeling she held against both Trent and herself.

But as the days went on and the exacting details of her new enterprise increased, she found little enough time in which to think of Doctor Lowell or Trent. From morning to dark, she labored at her tea room and at night hurried to the Women's University Club, and went to bed, utterly fagged.

The tea room progressed slowly. One may wonder that its success was not assured from the outset. Outside was a quaint signboard bearing the legend: "At the Sign of the Caddy." The caddy was done in gold, the legend in light blue, and the background was a dull brown. Inside, the decorations, furnished by a Japanese importing company—which had also supplied the tables, chairs, and other furnishings—were tasteful and attractive. Eleanor had a cook at forty dollars a month and two waitresses at twenty-five dollars a month—each one of whom was relied upon to examine the trays as they left the kitchen and see that no detail of tastefulness in the arrangement of food was lacking—while Eleanor herself acted as cashier. It had been impressed upon her by a friend, who had had experience, that she and no hireling must sit at the desk, because upon the personal charm of the cashier—charm both as to dress and to "lady-like" demeanor—rested the main chance of the success of the enterprise. She had been told that unless she were better dressed than any woman patron who came into the place, she could hope for nothing but failure, and in the belief that this advice was good—which it was—she had spent more than she had intended upon new gowns.

She had estimated that after a month the tea room ought to be earning thirty dollars a day gross, but at the end of the second week its income was far from that. There had never, in fact, been a day when more than three tables were occupied at the same time. Busy shoppers came in and bought tea and toast, demanded rolls thrown in, and then sulked when Eleanor denied their request. The girl came to realize that the number of waspish, peckish, trivial, inconsequential women in this world far exceeded her original estimate, while as for the men who occasionally drifted in, they were impossible creatures, who seemed to think that she was a hireling, placed at her desk merely for the purpose of retaining their trade by smiling sweetly upon them and upon their silly attempts at flirtation, which Eleanor would not do.

There were two days when she was compelled to remain in her room at the club with a sick headache—something she had never known in her old life—while the tea room was left to run itself as it would. Thus lying, in her darkened room, iced towels wrapped about her throbbing head, she feverishly took account of stock.

Where was she failing? Oh, somewhere there was a flaw! She could not doubt it. The room was ideally located, and crowds of shoppers were constantly passing at the noon hour. Yet so few ever came in! If only she could talk to her aunt! But her aunt had given her up absolutely. Was it that she had lost interest in Eleanor when she had learned definitely that Caleb Lowell and not her niece was to get that interest in the coal company? Absurd thought! And yet, in the bitterness of her mind, Eleanor would fancy it so. And Trent! Through her mind there went singing and winging a sudden pang of longing, a pang so sharp, so unexpected, that she sat bolt upright in her bed, forgetting her throbbing

head. If Robert Trent had only been
 Robert Pinkham! But he hadn't been,
 and in his clever way he had deliberately
 made a fool of her before every
 one. Her eyes burned and she rubbed
 them drowsily, for sleep was beginning
 to claim her through sheer weariness.
 If only Aunt Julia could come to her!
 But she was another shattered hope.
 Eleanor fell asleep.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

AN IDYL

UNDER the moon he comes,
 In velvet green arrayed,
 A Scaramouch who strums
 His midnight serenade:

"My lady is so sweet
 Upon her emerald throne,
 That moon and stars compete
 To make her all their own;

"But she may pity me—
 Unworthy, ugly boor—
 Smile on the minstrelsy
 Of lowly troubadour."

Alas, his queen, most rare,
 Of ivory and gold,
 Lists with a languid air;
 Unto his wooing, cold.

Of lovers winged she dreams,
 Born of the sun and dew,
 That dance o'er fields and streams,
 Alive with rainbow hue.

But still her wooer twangs
 His hopeless roundelay,
 Reiterating pangs
 That wear his heart away.

At last, his monotone
 Wearies the queen to sleep;
 His song becomes a groan—
 He makes a frenzied leap!

*Deep silence holds the pool,
 The lily's petals close;
 The frog—he was a fool;
 • What else could one suppose?*

D. E. WHEELER.



The Cuckoo's Nest

By Della Thompson Lutes

"A Poet of the Wastebasket," etc.



NO one knew whether her name was really Bolton or not, but Bolton was the name she went by in that part of the town where she went by any name at all, and Bolton was supposedly the name of the last man she had been married to. That was the way people spoke of it—the last man she had been married to, as if marrying were, with her, a periodical ceremony. Some went so far as to insinuate that even the ceremony was a negligible affair, and the elder Mr. Deming scathingly denounced her abode as a "cuckoo's nest."

"A damned cuckoo's nest, sir!" he raged at his son, handsome, slender, and very pale, standing stiffly at a window of their bachelor home one brilliant morning in October. "One bird pushes another out of the nest! The only difference being," he proceeded, "that it's the old cock bird——"

"Father!" Young Deming flashed a shocked and disgusted look into the older man's angry countenance.

"That's what I said," reiterated his father grimly. "A damned cuckoo's nest! And what you, a supposedly decent and well-bred boy—for boy you are——"

"I'm twenty-one, father," interrupted his son with dignity.

"Ass!" His father spat the word

contemptuously and raged about the room. "If you weren't an ass, you wouldn't be running after that Jezebel over there! Cut her out, I tell you, and I'll raise your allowance, send you away from town——"

"I can't cut her out, father. I—I've been there too much."

"You don't mean to tell me there's any trouble!"

The older man stopped suddenly in his restless tramping and shot a distressed and alarmed look at his son. The young man drew himself up with dignity.

"No trouble," he said coldly, "except that she has been kind to me—made me happy—and very comfortable, and I have been there a great deal. If I should suddenly cease, it might injure her reputation."

"Reputation! Don't you know, you young fool, that that woman hasn't had a shred of reputation for ten years? That she never had any? She——"

"Father," his son interrupted him firmly, "I can't stand by and hear you besmirch a woman's name in that way." His father snorted and kicked a footstool across the room, but apparently considered any further argument useless. "Mrs. Bolton is unfortunate." A smothered groan from his father. "Her husband was a worse than worthless

brute. She would get a divorce from him if she could, but the absurd laws of New York State forbid that. I would marry her if I could——"

"Oh, Arthur, don't be a fool!" There was beseeching agony in both words and look of the elder man. He was actually aging with the moments.

"If you call it being a fool to marry the woman who trusts you, loves you, understands you——"

His father crumpled into a big chair by the hearth. His legs were flung out before him, twisted and inert, his arms hung limply. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the youth before him, in whose lean, pale face burned a light that the father could not bear. Arthur Deming's mother was dead, and her son was so vivid a reincarnation of her glowing, spiritual beauty that he sometimes drove his father to desperation.

"——why, then I am a fool," the boy continued, "for I should surely marry her at once if I could. I intend to do so as soon as it can be arranged. As it is——"

"As it is"—his father drew his legs together and stiffened to a sitting posture—"I suppose you'll go on hanging around there until——"

"I shall continue to go there," his son broke in coldly, "until such time as I have perfected my art and can take her away. She is afraid. The neighbors treat her unkindly. She depends upon me and needs me. I am the only friend she has."

"Arthur"—the old man stood again, came close to his son, and spoke with deep earnestness—"don't you know that you've damned her with your own words? When a woman has no friends among her own sex, there's a reason for it. She's done something to deserve condemnation."

"They're jealous of her, father. She's beautiful——"

"Pah!"

"Father! If you keep on talking that way——"

"You'll leave, I suppose, and go there to live. That'd be about the next step in your asinine performance."

The idea seemed to take shape in the young man's mind. The light in his eyes deepened, and his face paled.

"If you can't understand——"

He turned and walked out of the room, closing the door after him. If he had slammed it, perhaps the sense of finality that settled upon his father's heart would have been less heavy, but he simply closed it, slowly and definitely.

The older man sat down and stared into the flames. He heard his son moving about the room above. He could follow the movements perfectly. He knew that his only child was preparing to leave him. He knew that he had been tactless in handling this affair of "puppy love." He knew the boy would find that all he had said, and more, was true, and would come to his senses, and that the wisest and safest thing was to shelter him through the running of the fever, to be on hand with the support of encouragement and experience when he "came out of it." And yet he could not bring himself to go to the boy and try to patch it up. He wished with an aching heart, and for the millionth time, that the boy's mother were there. She could have handled that highly strung, idealistic, chivalrous temperament as he had never been able to.

But the boy's mother was not there, and the boy was going. He was gone.

Mrs. Bolton was one of those women who seem to have been created solely to minister to the physical comfort of man and animal. One might almost have said man and other animals, for, so far as she was concerned, men were mostly animal.

Flowers grew for her, too, as they would not for the most virtuous maid or matron. Let her pluck a slip from the scraggiest geranium and put it in a pot in her southern window, and it grew and blossomed with the same vigorous abandon as her own girlhood and womanhood. Cats and dogs loved her, and the neighbors' children stole into her kitchen on the days when cookies were baked. Hers was a personality that bespoke comfort, and if her morals and principles had tallied with it, she would have been an honored and cherished wife, the mother of a brood of adoring children, and a neighbor whose household recipes and advice would have been widely sought.

As it was, her moral perspective was sadly askew, and the only reason that young Arthur Deming's vision was blinded to this fact was that his was a nature diametrically opposed to hers. He possessed a sense of chivalry most unusual in the young men of his day and station, and not even two years at college—cut short against his father's advice, and much to his father's chagrin, to take up the study of dramatic art—had dimmed or defeated it.

Young Deming had a cherished and idealized vision of the lovely mother who had died when he was fifteen, leaving a dreamy lad to mourn himself to a shadow over her loss. When he had begun to look upon the world again, he had invested every woman with the spiritual mantle of his mother, and believed all women angels because she was one.

His visionary nature had brought with it a legacy of loneliness and longing for the sympathy of woman, and as an ill fate would have it, Mrs. Bolton was the first who had seemed to understand his hungry heart. If he had but known it, her understanding went no farther or deeper than those demands of the physical nature which a mother's love and care would have satisfied,

added to those other demands and cravings which come with the later years.

In the school of dramatic art where Arthur Deming was conscientiously endeavoring to develop a very real and genuine talent, Mrs. Bolton held the position of costumer; that is, she mended and concocted such costumes as were used. She was, of course, as such women often are, something of an artist herself. Far from being a fastidious housekeeper, she was an excellent home maker. Her rooms were comfortable and attractive. There was a wide lounge, luxurious with pillows that her own hands had made. There were easy-chairs, footstools, shaded lamps, and flowers. The furnishings of her home were simple and very plain, for her own earnings were light and, it would appear, the late Mr. Bolton had not been a gentleman of means. Her fingers, however, were dexterous and had the artist's twist, so that all she touched bloomed, even to the ardent natures of the men who warmed themselves at her hearth.

If the mainspring of woman's nature—her moral equilibrium—had not been warped, she would have possessed that priceless combination which, according to Balzac, makes a perfect wife—the qualities of the mistress and of the mother. As it was, she had not the stamina to withstand the attractions of promiscuity.

Young Arthur Deming, his years outnumbering the sophistication of his soul by far, left his father's roof without another look into that sunlit room where a gray and stricken man slumped miserably before a dying fire. He took his bag and a few other possessions to an apartment house near the school, and proceeded to Mrs. Bolton's home to acquaint her with his fortunes.

She met him, as he had been perfectly sure she would, with outstretched arms and limpid brown eyes not unlike in expression those of some friendly

animal. Arthur fell into her arms as a child falls into the lap of its mother after a hurt. If he could only have known it, it was the maternal in her that, so far, appealed to him—the deep bosom, wide hips, and placid smile, rather than the subtler fascinations of the mistress which would have their turn later. Tears from the hurt of his heart stung his eyes as she led him to the wide sofa and, sitting beside him, drew his head to the comforting hollow of her arm. She cuddled and soothed and healed the bruised and wounded spirit, made him a cup of delicious coffee, and fed him with her own hands. Then, when he was quite himself again, a stern-faced, grateful-eyed young creature who looked at her with the devotion of a dog, she tried to send him home.

Mrs. Bolton was not altogether a bad woman, by any means. Her type is never all bad; it simply lacks a certain moral strength. She was very sincere in her efforts to effect a reconciliation between father and son, even urging a severance of the relations between herself and Arthur, said relations not being as yet particularly satisfactory to her amorous nature, by reason of Arthur's reluctant and chivalrous soul. She liked the youth, was even quite fond of him, but her wanton heart knew that there was always another man just around the corner, and, in this instance, one of perhaps more impetuous disposition. She also knew that it would be a sin and a shame for him to sacrifice home, art, and reputation for her sake, since she knew very well that she had it not in her to be faithful to one man long. She was genuinely sorry, too, for the broken old man whom Arthur so pathetically portrayed. As for her own reputation, that fair name for which a gallant and foolish youth had left his home and only parent and for which he was ready to sacrifice his future, Mrs. Bolton was well

aware that it was now beyond redemption, and the fact did not worry her.

She argued zealously in behalf of Arthur's salvation. Her seeming immolation, however, was as good a tool as she could have used, had she been a deeper woman, to hold him to her side. Arthur was adamant. Would he desert a true and loving woman who was, herself, ready to suffer the sacrifice of every tender emotion for his sake, for a father who had insulted, misunderstood him, and— Delicately he refrained from relating in further detail the argument that had severed their relations. No, he would not go home—not to the end of eternity! He would take a position that only yesterday had been offered him; an inferior position, true, and one that under ordinary circumstances he would not have considered, particularly since there were but a few more months at the school. But these were not ordinary circumstances. It was a step, at least, and, between endearments, he assured her that he could then take her away. She could get her divorce in another State and they would marry. And so, his foolish, beautiful eyes glowing with the light of honorable intent, he portrayed a rosy outcome of this troublous and tragic present.

Mrs. Bolton's innate weakness, her inability to cope with present temptation, soon silenced the arguments of her better nature, and they drifted into a relation that became the scandal of Arthur's acquaintance and the climax of his father's bitterness.

The salary that Arthur got would not admit of the talked-of departure, if, indeed, Mrs. Bolton's lazy nature would have considered such a change, and so her home became his refuge. After late performances there were later suppers. Arthur must be cuddled and petted and made to lie on the wide lounge to rest, until, almost before he knew it himself, he was spending the

greater part of his days—and nights—at Mrs. Bolton's home, and the matter of their relation was established. Then the elder Deming packed his household goods and moved away from the home of his youth, the home where he had brought his bride, where his son had been born.

The natural and logical end of the episode followed within a few months. Arthur reached Mrs. Bolton's house unexpectedly early one night in May. A heavy cold had disabled his voice, and a substitute for him had been found. As he let himself in with his own latchkey, wondering somewhat at the dimness of the lights within, a man came stealthily down the stairs. One quick, startled look into his face showed to Arthur a blurred and reddened eye and full, blowzy cheeks, and a hot breath tainted with liquor swept sickeningly into his nostrils. Arthur recoiled as from some repulsive contact, and then tore his way furiously into the house. His was the one-man-for-one-woman nature, and he had no forgiveness for promiscuity. Here was the woman for whom he had sacrificed home, deserted father, forfeited his future, deceiving him, betraying him!

As he pushed past the intruder to face a rather disheveled and dismayed woman, his father's words returned to him: "A damned cuckoo's nest, sir! One bird pushes another out of the nest!" He knew that he was pushed out of the nest, that he could never return.

He did not even accuse her. The thing was too palpable. His father had been right. He felt a little sick at the stomach while he packed his belongings, and hardly listened to the babbling excuses, the weak subterfuges poured into his ear. As for any farewell, any caress for the woman still warm from the embrace of that repulsive creature at the door—his soul recoiled with disgust.

With hardly a word, he left the house in which he had laid down the clean sacrifice of youth, turned his back on the cuckoo's nest, and left the town. He did not know where his father had gone, and would not have sought him if he had. He had no reason to believe that a justly irate parent would receive a penitent prodigal, and he would not sue.

Within the year, a child was born to Mrs. Bolton—a girl. The cuckoo that had crowded Arthur Deming out denied the parentage and shortly gave way to another bird of the same feather. So Mrs. Bolton raised her eldest daughter with a promiscuous brood fathered by an always shifting succession, one shoving another out even as Arthur Deming had perhaps crowded out the man before him and had himself given way to the next man around the corner.

The brood was a noisy and a dirty one. Mrs. Bolton, as the years and a growing succession of "losses" fell upon her, deteriorated in persona' appearance and in all her domestic affairs. She grew slatternly. The wide, maternal hips became fat and sloppy, the deep bosom was but a protuberance, and a double chin portrayed an ever-increasing laxity of purpose.

The children ran wild—all except the eldest daughter. She was different. She kept her own person dainty and clean, and she made valiant attempts to make both the house and the other children presentable. She stuck to her school work regularly and eagerly, while the others came and went at the wind's will. She cared for her mother with a lofty and chivalrous devotion that won for her the bewildered regard of the neighbors, particularly as, in the years of her daughter's young girlhood, that mother took a rather more headlong spurt on the downhill road than she had heretofore pursued. There was no doubt but that the limpid brown

eyes were dulled by liquor, or that the unsteadiness of her gait was more often due to some bacchantic revel than to attacks of rheumatism and dizziness, as explained by her daughter, passionately on the defensive.

Huldah, her mother had named her, the name of some favorite heroine from one of her loved novels—it would be superfluous to mention that Mrs. Bolton had been addicted from her childhood to novels of a certain type—and a name, that, after all, seemed to fit the girl's peculiar nature. She was reserved to a degree, lofty in ideals, and scrupulous in honorable intent.

The neighbors all agreed that Huldah was different from the others, but attached no great significance to the fact. It was simply that she had not yet reached the age where she would "break out." Always they were watching for her to "break out."

"She can't amount to anything," they said. "You wouldn't expect her to, with a thing like that for a mother and nobody knows who for a father. She's bound to break loose before long."

But she never did. Straightly she walked her little way through life to her eighteenth year, and to the astonishment of all who had predicted her downfall, was ready to be graduated with her class, a lovely, winsome girl with eyes that looked at you as the eyes of the sainted Joan meet yours from the canvas, with lips that were more tightly drawn than the lips of a young girl should be, and with a manner so reserved, a dignity so serene and pronounced, that none dared penetrate the cloak she chose to draw about her.

"The most brilliant one of them all," said her teachers, "and dramatic! The child has wonderful ability, if not actual talent."

Some of them even went so far as to predict a future for her and to say that she had genius. At any rate, she

was a brilliant performer in all the school theatricals, and was given the most prominent part in the play which was the grand climax of the senior year.

Now it happened that Arthur Deming was playing in a neighboring city and, between engagements, had a night off, which he suddenly decided to spend in visiting the city of his youth. It was the first time he had set foot therein since the day of his tragical departure, and he sought neither friend nor acquaintance, but made a solitary pilgrimage to the neighborhood of his old home, and returned to his hotel depressed in spirit and regretful of this foolish adventure.

The hotel that he had chosen happened to be near the small theater where the graduating exercises in which Huldah Bolton was to play the leading part were held, and, too tired and depressed to seek any particular attraction, Arthur Deming dropped in and took a seat. He was intensely sorry that he had yielded to the whim to revisit these scenes of his youth, and, in order to lift his fallen spirits, he turned his thoughts resolutely back to the charming and happy home that was now his.

He had not found it easy to ask a woman to share a life which his idealizing soul considered besmirched. He had not even looked upon a woman's face with more than an impersonal glance for fully five years after the episode with Mrs. Bolton. Then he had met Margaret Ellsworth. She was a lovely girl with something of the same deep-bosomed, wide-browed beauty that had attracted him in Mrs. Bolton. Hers was the beauty of refinement, however, of long lines of cultured ancestry, of pure-souled and clean-bodied forbears. She was by no means of the narrow or prudish type, but you would nevertheless know that any suggestion of laxity would be as foreign and repulsive to

her as to the most puritanic of her ancestors.

They loved one another from the first. From the first, too, Arthur knew that when he asked her to marry him—if he could ever so presume—he must tell her about that other experience, so different from this that the very thought of it brought floods of shame to his cheek. So strange, however, are the impulses of love that all of a sudden he found, one white-and-silvery moonlight night of late summer, that he had declared himself, and that she had, trustingly and lovingly, accepted him as her betrothed. Then he made the effort to tell her. He halted and stammered over something she must know. But Margaret, once she found that there was nothing in this mysterious past which need separate them now, wanted to hear no more.

"I love you, Arthur," she said simply, "and I should go on loving you just the same, no matter what there has been in your past years. You might tell me something that would make me sorry, pain me even, but so long as it couldn't change my love for you, and absolutely needn't separate us now, why should I be grieved or pained? Let whatever it was go back to that past from which you're trying to recall it, and forget it."

And so, after an ugly night and day of struggle, of anguished determination to go away forever from her clean presence, with an alternating understanding of the suffering this would bring her, he abode by her decision and they were married. Then indeed, in the great happiness that came to them, he forgot Mrs. Bolton, and the specter of that unhappy episode faded into the dim past until the night when he roused from his introspective dreams to watch Huldah Bolton holding an audience breathless by her brilliant and utterly charming performance.

Arthur Deming was at once carried

away by the young girl's acting, and hastily whispered to the woman sitting next him, asking her name.

"Huldah Bolton," replied the woman.

Through a mist of miserable memories, he watched the girl's remarkable performance. Then he turned again to the stranger at his side.

"Do you know her?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the woman wonderingly, "as well as any one does, perhaps. She's a shy little thing and sticks pretty close to home—miserable place, though. But I've been with my girl to the rehearsals— That's my girl, the one in pink. She's younger than Huldah. Huldah's eighteen."

Arthur's eyes turned perfunctorily to the designated figure, and back again to the other girl in her old-fashioned gown.

After the last curtain, Arthur, his never colorful face whiter than usual, found his way to where the young actors were holding a little reception behind the stage.

He went at once to Huldah, who was standing at one side, alone, flushed, her eyes shining, but whether with happiness or tears, he, quick to detect human emotions, was not prepared to say. She was watching the proud and happy greetings of parents, the exchange of compliments, receiving those that came to her with a little air of reserved dignity that was becoming to her slim, girlish beauty. In the midst of other emotions, Arthur wondered if she were secretly grieving because there was no proud parent there to glow with happiness over her performance. He stepped up to her and held out a hand.

"I was one of your spellbound audience," he said in that charming manner which had made him the idol of a whole country. "I want to congratulate you upon some very real acting."

The girl flushed with pleasure, and her repressed lips broke into a smile that shot a shaft of pain to the heart

of the man. It reminded him suddenly and poignantly of the way his mother had smiled.

"Thank you," she said softly. "I love it."

"Are you planning to take any special training? To go in for the thing seriously?" His throat was dry and hot, and he framed his sentences nervously.

The girl looked up at him, her eyes suddenly filling with tears.

"Oh, if you knew how I want to!" she breathed. "It's the dream of my life!"

"Will you come to the Hotel Breton to-morrow morning at nine?" asked Arthur impulsively. "I'd rather not give you my name now, but you may trust me. I shall look for you in the lobby at nine." He bade her good night and turned swiftly away.

That night Arthur Deming made some mental calculations. That the girl was his own daughter had become a definite fact in his mind. She was eighteen. It was eighteen years since — He turned away from framing the unhappy affair in words. Besides, she was an exact replica of him at her age. It was the picture of himself, the life-size painting that had hung in his father's house and now hung in his own, that he had seen when she had first come upon the stage. He had a daughter—that was the appalling fact. And yet was it altogether appalling? There was a strange thrill at his heart, an exhilaration and an excitement altogether new, a strange and eager desire for morning and the hour of nine to arrive. But, having a daughter, and a daughter with evident refinement, innate culture, and no small amount of his own wonderful talent, what was he to do about it?

It was the one great regret and grief of both his life and Margaret's that their union had been childless. He had ventured to suggest the adoption of a child to make sunshine in their empty

home, but always Margaret had held off "just a little longer."

"I want *your* child, Arthur," she had said. "It isn't only that I want *a* child, but *yours—ours*, a part of both of us. That would be the wonder of it."

All this he thought of that night in his hotel bedroom after the play. He had never been able to give Margaret the child she hungered for, but *here was his daughter*, the reincarnation of his own youth, a girl flower just bursting into bloom. He got up and walked about the room, slipping the curtain of his window to the top and staring out upon the lights of the town, which he did not see.

His daughter! Product of his vigorous, uncontaminated youth! He did not even consider whose breast had nourished the seed which he, cursory bird of the hour, had bred, but took unto himself all the credit. The wonder of it grew upon him by the moment. Once he, with God, had had the power to create, and *he had created!* He glowed with pride at the thought, and warm waves of exultation swept over him. He could not stand still, but walked restlessly about, moving things on his dressing table, opening and closing a book, then returning to the windows to stare again, unseeing, out upon the blinking midnight lights.

A benevolent and beaming moon smiled at him from above the tops of the buildings, and its broad white rays came sweeping in at the window. He turned and snapped off the light, and then went back to sit on the broad ledge, smiling as he did so at the sudden remembrance of a childish tradition that people sometimes went mad when the moon was at its full. He wondered whimsically if he were not a little mad himself at this marvelous thing that had happened to him. For now, as never before, he felt himself a *man*. He realized to the full how terribly the "mental cancer" had eaten in—the chagrin,

the defeat, the *shame* of not having played his part in the world of men. And now he could lift up his head. He, too, was a man.

A cloud drifted across the moon, and with a little chill he thought of Margaret. He must tell Margaret now the story that she had put aside so many years ago. But she would understand. He could trust Margaret to understand. And the man had so proven himself to her that she would forgive the youth. And then he would tell her of his daughter, *their* daughter, for they would take the girl away from her baneful surroundings, educate her, watch her flower and blossom. She would bring music and sunshine and laughter into their home.

Suddenly he realized how very silent and drab that home had been, and with a pang of compunction he wondered how Margaret had endured it. But now she would have youth and joy with her, *his* youth and his joy. It was as if he would go back to her holding a precious gift in his hands. What her woman heart would think of the other woman's part in it never entered his mind. He was sure of Margaret, so sure that finally he lay down upon his pillow with a happy smile upon his lips, hoping to dream away the hours that must elapse before *she* came and he could take her away.

He woke early, and lay for a moment wondering vaguely why he felt an excitement in his veins such as he had not experienced for years. Then he remembered and sprang from bed, eager and thrilling. *She* was coming at nine—it was now but seven—or was it *he* that was coming, his own youth coming back to him? As he bathed and dressed, with exceeding and punctilious care, he thought of many things. His father, for one. He could understand now, as never before, the anguish his father had felt when he had seen his son going out to—

Then his mother. *She* was like his mother, for he was like his mother, and she was like him. This latter was so obvious that they would need to go far from old associations, old acquaintances and friends, and make a new home. But Margaret would do that. He could trust Margaret.

His thoughts returned to the girl and he wondered how he should tell her, for he had decided at once that he would do that. She was old enough to understand, partly, at any rate, and she would have seen enough and heard enough to be glad of this to fasten to. She would be glad, poor little girl, to know that her father, at least, had been clean and true in intention—

Her father! His mind stopped working at that and simply revolved around and around the words. He was fastening his necktie before the mirror when those words came to him, and he rested his hands on the bureau and leaned forward, studying his own face intently. He had given *her* those eyes that he had looked into the night before—*his own eyes in another face*. The wonder of that stifled him, and he went to the window to let the sweet freshness of the June morning cool and steady him.

When he was dressed and ready, it was not yet eight o'clock, but he went to breakfast in order to take no chances on being late when she came. He could not eat, however, for suddenly the fear assailed him that she might not come. Suppose she should have described him so accurately that her mother had become suspicious and would not let her come. Or suppose—the thought sickened him, and he rose from the table—suppose her mother should come with her. She was a curious creature. If the child told her that a strange man had asked her to come to his hotel—

He had not before thought of that irregularity, or that the questionableness of his intent might enter the girl's

mind. Now it was perfectly obvious to him that she would be fearful, that she would suspect him of duplicity. He was suddenly certain that she would not come, and his mind went off to a hundred cunning and utterly impossible schemes for getting her to see him. Nevertheless, while the harassed and tormented mind vexed itself sore, his feet led him unerringly to a sheltered seat of observation near the door by which she would enter if she came. There was yet half an hour to wait, and he tried to read. He told himself that she would not come and that he might as well kill the hour and a half before his train. But he could not read, so he folded the paper and tried to watch the people, but, instead, watched the clock.

At ten minutes to nine he could no longer sit still, and got up and went to his room. He would not be a fool, he told himself. He would pack his bag and go to the station. But after he had thrown a hairbrush and collar together into the bag, he went, refusing to listen to his own reasoning, back to the lobby.

The clock pointed to nine, and yet he pretended not to look at it. He went to the news stand and, with his back resolutely to the door, studied a time card. Finally, realizing that the clerk was asking him if there was anything further, he turned away, his eyes lifted against his will, and she was standing, timorous, frightened, poised for flight, in the doorway.

He went to her and took her hand, as you would that of a child, and led her to a little writing room near by. Here were a desk, a couple of chairs, and some palms. The girl looked about shyly, obviously a stranger to such surroundings, but sat down with unconscious grace and ease upon the chair that Arthur placed for her.

"I—I hardly knew whether to expect you." Inwardly he was furious

at the emotion that overwhelmed him and threatened to deprive him of speech. "I was afraid you might think it strange——"

"Mother did." The girl lifted her head with a little gesture of protective defiance that instantly transported the memory of the man back to that sunlit October day when his own young head had gone up in defense of the same woman. "Mother would have come with me if she had not been—ill."

His eyes dropped before the light that glowed in hers, and he saw her, not as she sat there before him, but as himself standing defiantly before his father. He knew, too, that the slovenly, careless woman had had no thought of her daughter's protection, but he did not know that the mother had still been sleeping off the heavy stupor of her usual night's debauch when the daughter had stolen away.

"My name is Wilber," he said—it was his middle name and he had early decided to give her only that—"and I was so impressed with your work that I wanted to talk with you."

Inwardly he was chafing at this prefatory play. He wanted to get at the real matter. But she sat so still, so shy and childish, and yet with so impregnable a cloak of dignity about her, that he knew the way to her heart and to the telling of his story must be a roundabout one.

"Are you—have you any plans, now that you've graduated? Would you like to go away—to school, to college, to study the art you seem so fond of?"

Her eyes had widened, and a quick light spread over her face, but her lips tightened in a way that struck chill to Arthur's heart.

"Oh, yes, sir!" She clasped her small hands eagerly. "I would give the world to go, but——"

"But what?" He could smile at her now, thinking how sweet it would be in a few moments to place in her hands

the gift that she would give the world for.

"My mother—she—needs me. I couldn't leave my mother."

Arthur felt a quick rush of anger, and again he was back in that sunlit room of many years ago, only now he was not the defiant youth, but the desperate and exasperated father. He did not like the line of her lips or the way her eyes looked back into his. There was an uncanny sense about it, as if he were arguing with himself and saw the uselessness of it before he began.

"But there are others, are there not? Isn't there some one else to care for your mother—if you go?"

He was shaken and appalled at the mingled look of fear and defiance that came into her face. It was not difficult to read that the thought of those "others" was one that dismayed her.

"I can't go," she repeated, drooping her head until he could see only the flushed cheeks. "If I could study here — Mother thought perhaps I could get some work in the dramatic school here—"

The man to whom she was talking jumped up abruptly and walked hastily back and forth across the little room. A page came to the door and looked in, calling a name, and Arthur went and stood before her.

"You ought to get away from all that," he said brusquely, and, as he spoke, he had again that odd sense of being not himself, but his father. "It's —" He had difficulty in refraining from adding, "nothing but a damned cuckoo's nest," but a glance into her set young face, pale now and startled, but obviously on the defensive, checked him. "You ought to have your chance," he added lamely, and turned away again to sit in the chair by the desk. The thing was not going well. He picked up a penholder and was surprised to have it snap in his hand.

"If I could get into the dramatic

school—" timidly she ventured to repeat, but it had an ill effect. The man moved irritably in his chair.

"Suppose I give you a better chance than that," he said, determining grimly to come at once, and roughly, to the point. "Suppose my wife and I take you entirely away from that—give you a home, education—"

"But my mother!" The flush had come to her cheeks again, and her eyes glowed, but the voice was very firm and the lips very straight. "My mother is—ill—"

Arthur got up and walked about again restlessly. Was that—Jezebel—going to demand the sacrifice of another young, clean life? She should not!

"But is it"—he was going to probe now, an ugly stab—"is it just the place—there—for a young girl like you?"

The girl rose slowly from her chair, and the artist soul of the man exulted over the splendid poise and majesty of her movements.

"It is—my mother's home," she said simply, but, he felt, definitely, "and I must go back."

Now, as she turned, he knew how his father's heart had been pierced on that October day when he, the son, had turned his back and left. Already he loved this child with all the pent-up passion of his paternal heart. His arms ached and yearned for her. He longed with all the intensity of his nature to hold her head upon his shoulder, to see her smile into his eyes, to hear her say, "Father." And she was going. The slim, poorly clad little figure was at the door.

"Come here!" he called. "Just a moment, Huldah!"

The girl turned, surprised that he knew her name.

"I—I can't let you go," he said, his voice rough and shaken. "I—I want to help you. I am an actor myself—"

"Oh, are you?" A brilliant, flashing

smile broke up the rather somber beauty of her little face, and she came swiftly toward him. "My father was an actor, too!"

Arthur looked at her, stunned and white. What did she know about her father? Considerable, apparently, as she proceeded to show, clasping and unclasping her nervous hands with little dramatic gestures.

"My father was a splendid actor. He died, you see."

Arthur sat weakly down by the desk and simply looked at her.

"He died when I was a very tiny baby, almost before I was born, and it broke my mother's heart. She has been—she hasn't been—she's never been—quite herself since. She's told me—nothing seemed of any use. She didn't care—for anything. But *I* did." The beautiful little head went up proudly. "I have always cared *tremendously*, just because I *had* a father like that. And I've tried—oh, how I've tried"—she clasped her thin, exquisite hands to her breast—"to be what he'd like me to be!"

Arthur Deming had slumped in his chair, his legs flung out stiffly, his arms hanging limply. His eyes looked at her hungrily, despairingly. In his mind the thought was whirling over and over, round and round, "She is *mine!* She is *mine!*" and, combating it, meeting it at every turn, was that other, "But not for me, not for me!"

"I have his picture here." She stepped closer and spoke in a hushed tone, as of something sacred. "Would you like to see it?"

She pulled a locket from her bosom as she spoke, a locket that Arthur in-

stantly recognized as one he had given Mrs. Bolton, one that had been his mother's. She opened it gently and displayed before his despairing eyes a small picture of himself as he had been in youth, a face so like the flower face of the girl before him in every contour and line that he was startled and fascinated and thrilled anew.

"If he had lived," said the girl tenderly, replacing the locket, "everything would have been right. My mother would not have lost heart, and I—I might have been—like other girls." A sob caught the words, and a wave of bitterness, the first she had shown, swept her face.

"If you would come to us——"

Arthur drew himself together and spoke feebly. Even his dulled and shattered mind could grasp the fact that an idolized and revered father, dead, left no place for a living father, strange and unknown.

"No, thank you." She held out a slender little hand, which he grasped in both of his. "I can't leave my mother." Then, as her eyes swept his face, a wondering, startled look came into them. "Why—you look like *him*, except that you are so—so much *older*."

Older! Yes, a thousand years older than he had been that gay, glad morning.

"And now I must go. Thank you for—for—thinking about it. I shall try very hard to—do something."

He could not move to walk with her to the door, as, with all his heart he longed to do. He could not even say good-by. He could only stand there dumbly and watch her go.



I WANT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH A GREAT—STRONG—MAN!

By Gelett Burgess

I'M tired of the Willie boys,
The sentimental, silly boys;
I want to have a love affair on quite a different plan;
I want a bliss ecstatic
In a manner quite emphatic;
I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!

CHORUS:

I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!
I want to have the maddest time since first the world began.
I want to have a master
Who will make my heart beat faster;
I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!
I could stand a lot of loving from a great—strong—man!

I am sick of flirts at dances
And such frivolous romances;
I do not care to dally with another "also ran;"
I am crazy for the rapture
Of a wild, exciting capture;
I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!

CHORUS:

I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!
The soft and sissy silly ones from now I'm going to ban;
I want a man whose ardor
Will make my heart beat harder;
I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!
I could give my soul in worship of a great—strong—man!

I don't care for mere flirtation
As a playful occupation;
I want to love a man who wants to *make* me love, and can!
Now that war has combed the fighters
From the tea-and-sandwich biters,
I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!

CHORUS:

I want to fall in love with a great—strong—man!
And that's why I am army mad, a furious soldier fan!
No more I'm going to trifle;
But a man who holds a rifle
I want to fall in love with—a great—strong—man!
Any man who wears a uniform's a—great—strong—man!



"Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat"—

By F. E. Bailey

III.—Her Absolute Discretion

LAURELTINE, standing on the shaggy lawn behind the Grants' house, watched Elsie Grant, five years a wife, cope, or attempt to cope, with her four children. To Laureltine, in her neat linen suit, whose short skirt exhibited the most beautiful legs in the world, the picture told a story. Laureltine knew that her legs must soon disappear forever, seeing that her sixteenth birthday approached; the thought and the picture combined threw a shadow upon her perfect face and clouded her violet eyes.

"*This*," a little malicious voice whispered to her soul, "is marriage. How do you like the look of it?"

Laureltine shook herself imperceptibly, and spoke.

"You take the baby, Elsie. He can't escape, so he's the least exhausting. I'll see that the rest don't commit suicide. At their age, the heat seems to make no difference."

Elsie Grant pushed a few stray wisps of damp hair out of her eyes and sighed. Unfortunately she sighed often. Her gaze wandered round the untidy garden, devastated by her young as by a horde of locusts; over Laureltine, pretty, faultlessly turned out; over herself, doomed to cheap clothes, weariness, everlasting struggle. To her, also, a little malicious voice whispered:

"*This* is marriage. Is it worth it?"

Round the corner of the house came Hubert Grant, M. R. C. P.; L. R. C. S. He strolled across the lawn light-

heartedly enough, dangling a binaural stethoscope in his hand.

"Good afternoon, Laureltine," he said, raising his soft hat. "Elsie dear, I have healed all my sick. Is there any tea going? Shall I command them to bring it?"

Elsie got up and stood beside her husband, who was looking at Laureltine with grateful satisfaction. He liked pretty, well-dressed girls. His gentle good humor rather annoyed Elsie.

"Oh, all right. I'll go and see. Mary's out for the afternoon, and cook's up to her ears."

Hubert watched her move away in a spirit of tired doggedness, with a half-deprecating smile. The smile meant that he was sorry not to be better off, but he couldn't help it, and he didn't understand getting tea, and why worry? He was tall, good looking in a rather feminine fashion, with a little cropped mustache and hair slightly curly.

"Aren't kids a nuisance?" he said lazily to Laureltine. "Their only excuse would be if they were as beautiful as you are."

"Well, they're yours, after all," enunciated Laureltine's cool, clear tones. "You can't just shelve them by saying they're a nuisance—at least, you can, but Elsie can't."

"Woman, my dear Laureltine, has been endued by nature with the necessary patience, and the care of her young

is attractive to her. Man's part lies elsewhere, making provision for mother and child. You're trying to set yourself up against the faculty!"

"Elsie looks half dead. I s'pose that's natural, too?" inquired Laureltine, with the pitiless scorn of her years. Amateur nursery-maiding had also soured even her sunny nature.

"Behold how this girl seeketh a quarrel with me! Elsie loves kids—all women do, thank God!" said the doctor piously, and moved off to carry a tray for his wife.

"Now come and have tea with me," pleaded Laureltine later, when the doctor had departed to his surgery. "You shall be quite quiet and still, and simply rest and stodge. You must, Elsie."

"Thanks awfully. I'll try, but it's very difficult," explained Elsie. "A doctor's wife's always on duty, you know, and I can't trust the servants."

Laureltine wandered home very thoughtfully.

"Mother," she said at last, "do you think Hubert Grant's good to Elsie?"

"I s'pose he is. I'm afraid they're rather hard up, though."

"Would you like father to be that sort of good to us next time he gets leave?" persisted Laureltine.

"Thank God father has always spoiled both of us! He understands women far too well not to," said Laureltine's mother, who was quite as pretty as Laureltine.

II.

In a pleasant lane of Avonbridge, Hubert Grant stopped his car to greet Laureltine, promenading with the dog Rags, alleged to be a terrier. He drove his own car for the sake of economy. After all, a doctor must possess a car.

Laureltine entertained him politely. She had no illusions where he was con-

cerned, which simplified matters considerably.

"And how is the Princess Laureltine this morning?" he inquired, standing in front of her, quite an attractive figure in clothes which, though by no means new, had a certain pride of ancestry. His eyes delighted in her young, slender beauty, accentuated by a thin, V-necked summer frock. "How well you harmonize with the other charming features of nature! How lucky I am to meet you!"

Laureltine smiled, regarding him thoughtfully.

"You should keep those pretty things for Elsie. I'm rather worried about her. She looks dead to the world these days."

His expression changed.

"Elsie's made of iron, though she mayn't look it. Speaking as a medical man, let me reassure you. The lay eye is easily deceived, Princess Laureltine, especially the eye of friendship. Now I am persuaded you put me down as a heartless husband."

"Not heartless—just a husband," cooed Laureltine, rejoicing to see her words get home.

"And that reminds me. Elsie rather wants you to motor into Westchester with me and choose some things. She can't get away herself. I wonder if you would?"

"Certainly, I'd do anything for Elsie."

"Right! I'll leave you now to proceed, even as Diana the huntress, accompanied by your faithful hound."

Laureltine watched the car fade into an indistinct blur. Her violet eyes hardened unspeakably.

"Fool!" she said distinctly, referring to Doctor Hubert Grant.

That evening, Elsie came to tea. Laureltine heaped for her the softest cushions, the richest cakes, the choicest cigarettes. She also talked affectionately about clothes, because a woman,

even if she never has new clothes, loves to talk about them. Also, they discussed men with a frankness and a lack of illusion that would have astonished those splendid creatures could they have heard.

"You're a dear thing, Laureltine," said Elsie at last, when she got up to go. "I feel ten years younger. Don't be in a hurry to get married. A married woman has so few men pals."

"By the way, Hubert told me you want me to go to Westchester with him and shop for you. Will you let me have a list?"

Elsie very nearly started. Then her married training reasserted itself.

"Oh, yes. Thanks awfully. I will if you don't mind," she replied carefully.

"Right-o!" observed Laureltine in the most ordinary tone.

III.

"And now, having achieved the cushion covers, let's consider ourselves a little. Let's have tea," suggested Hubert Grant.

Laureltine assented thankfully. She hated shopping.

He drew up the car outside Westchester's smartest tea shop, and piloted her to the most remotely secluded table. Laureltine sank into her chair a little wearily. What is attractive from a man who attracts is tedious to the point of misery from one who doesn't. However, a girl learns from her earliest years that if she accepts tea from a man she must, in a sense, earn it.

Hubert Grant almost sighed. He was drinking in Laureltine's perfect face, her violet eyes, her muslin frock with shoes and silk stockings to match. He loved to see her mess with little toys out of a vanity bag. Presently tea came, and he watched her pour it out. Mentally he cursed the conventions of our overcivilization.

Laureltine could see nothing but a tired woman with four young children in an untidy garden.

"Laureltine," said Hubert Grant, "are you happy?"

"I'm always happy over my tea."

"That's a curious bracelet!"

He stretched out a hand and drew hers nearer, ostensibly to look at the bracelet. Laureltine knew he only wanted to touch her. She had a swift terror lest she should flush with anger, but with a great effort she remained passively indifferent.

"Have you ever loved any one, Laureltine?" He delighted to linger over her name.

"I hate people who tell," she replied with an effort at coquettishness. "Have you?"

"I've imagined so, but it can't have been true."

"But you must be in love. You're married," said Laureltine, looking straight at him with calm violet eyes.

"Laureltine, you know as well as I do——"

"Oh, but mine's the lay mind. You said so the other morning. I know nothing whatever. It's a hobby of mine. Have some more tea!"

Then, on a sudden inspiration, she changed altogether. She let him flirt with her to his heart's content. She almost asked him to. She rested her chin on her hands and let him look into her eyes, and laughed. It was a little intoxicating. It showed her power, but she had another object in view. Her brain worked swiftly and exactly.

She almost nestled beside him in the car on the way home. Now and then her shoulder touched his, and the soft contact maddened him. They motored through the summer sunset with small gnats mourning in wailful choirs, and the stillness hushing everything like some benign anæsthetic.

Laureltine knew they were going a

very long way round, and awaited the inevitable. At the top of Starcross Hill, where the trees on either side of the way lean over and interlace, he stopped the car and took her in his arms. She drew away, and he prevented her; she struggled, and he would not let her go. Then, her violet eyes hardened into steel, she hacked furiously at his shins, wrenched herself away, and scrambled out of the car.

"Now," she panted, "I can tell you the truth! To begin with, I despise you, next you're a liar, and lastly you're found out! When you've apologized, you can drive me home, for if you think I'm going to walk five miles because you can't behave yourself, you're quite wrong."

"What exactly do you mean?" he asked.

"I despise you because you behave disgracefully to Elsie. You're a liar because I know, or you know, she never asked you to ask me to shop for her. You're found out because both she and I know exactly what you're really like."

Hubert Grant smiled a peculiar little smile. For a moment, he saw himself always poor, always in Avonbridge, always hampered by a wife and four children, never being able to do anything naughty. Then he turned to Laureline.

"I'm so sorry," he said very frankly, with a certain charm all his own. "To the excessive sensitiveness of your years, I must seem very black. Somehow I thought you were more experienced. When you're older, you'll judge less harshly, especially when you're married. I apologize very sincerely. Do you think we can be friends again?"

Laureline felt suddenly very young and constrained. The lecture she had prepared fled to the winds.

"Oh, all right," she replied awkwardly, and got up beside him.

When he set her down at her gate, he showed her a large box of chocolates hidden in the back of the car.

"For Elsie," he explained, and smiled again in a manner she could not understand.

"Mother," said Laureline that night during dinner, "all men, even nice men, are hateful."

"Men," replied Laureline's mother, "are always hateful, but there's always one man who isn't. He may be just man to all other women, but he differentiates very charmingly, in the case of the one woman. I dare say," pursued Laureline's mother, more to herself than to anybody else, "that it's very unfair and very illogical as regards the other women, but it's so heavenly for the one!"





Stymied at the Eighteenth

By A. C. Allenson

Author of "Red and Gray," etc



IN contradictoriness, old James McWham had Balaam's ass beaten forty different ways. He's dead now, and anyway he was a bachelor, so there's no harm in saying this. The morning he died—it was Sunday—the minister and elders of the Seascape Presbyterian Church danced a solemn jig of thanksgiving round the kirk session table; so it was reported. At fifty, McWham was a chronic invalid, a constant irritation to doctors who had prophesied his immediate dissolution countless times. At sixty, they said he was as good as in his coffin.

It was about that time that he sent for the minister and elders. There was a debt of two thousand dollars on the kirk. He would like to set Zion free before he went hence, but he was not as rich as some folks thought. It had been on his mind to leave the kirk a thousand or two in his will, but he had had a new inspiration. If they would agree to pay him two hundred dollars a year for life, he would give them the two thousand dollars spot cash. The annuity arrangement was only a prudential anchor to leeward, the habit of a business mind. As a matter of fact, he had already picked out his pallbearers. It looked, after a talk with the doctors, a lead-pipe cinch. It proved the lead pipe without the cinch, for McWham lingered shivering on the brink till something shoved him over at eighty-seven. This by the way, as illustrative of a phase of McWham.

Sit with him on a sunny afternoon in the shade of the golf-club veranda, and one saw him in a more agreeable aspect. Though no longer a player, except around the nineteenth hole, he belonged to the Augustan age of golf, when the game, to the ignorant barbarian, was only one of the odd foibles of the eccentric, though sturdy, Scottish mind. He spoke of St. Andrews, Prestwick, Musselburgh, as another might of Jerusalem, Rome, or Athens; of Tom Morris and "Young Tommy" as a chum of Julius Cæsar or Alexander the Great might have referred to those heroes. He mourned the flip crassness of a world that gives the name of golfer to any person who can hurl a club head with reasonable accuracy against a golf ball, that calls a golf club a "stick," and plays the game with sundry clubs, a lead pencil, and a score card, and drivels of "birdie" threes and fours.

The McWham mills, spacious, four-story brick buildings, were on the north side of the street; the Warrender mill, also brick and four story, stood just across the road. The knitters of one place could exchange criticisms of the personal appearances of passers-by with those of the other. Old McWham, on his good days, could sit at his office window and see pretty much what was going on in the Warrender office.

Warrender, father of the present head of the rival firm, had once been

McWham's partner. Then they had done the most imprudent thing possible—they had fallen in love with the same woman. In a world in which women are in the majority, and charming ones innumerable, the absurdity was too ridiculous for words. The lady had chosen Warrender, and McWham had not been a bit chivalrous. Instead of kissing her hand sadly—or doing something knightly that might have shaken her confidence in the accuracy of her choice and stuck a pin into her thought of the winner—and riding away to look the rest over, McWham had been quite huffy.

The partnership had been broken up. McWham had gone out and begun business independently, intent on showing how deep his love for the lady had been by jamming her husband into the bankruptcy court and the loved one herself into impecunious unhappiness. It had been his solemn joy to watch his mills extend to a dozen times their original capacity, while Warrender's had remained *in statu quo ante*.

Long had Seascope speculated as to what would be the disposition of the McWham properties when he was choked off them by the last enemy. As already intimated, he had not taken another "just as good" out of the plethora of feminine pulchritude, but had remained, what he richly deserved to be, a heart-and-body-wizened left-over. The general impression was that he would do one of those devilishly cynical things with his estate wherewith his kind succeed in their amiable purpose of bringing the greatest annoyance to the greatest number—found a university for Eskimos of sound moral propensities in Spitzbergen, or build a lunatic asylum for falsely prophetic doctors; something philanthropic like that.

Then, as was his wont, he fooled the public, this time by displaying ordinary, prosaic human feeling. He im-

ported an heir apparent from Scotland, one John McWham Macara.

Some said that John's mother, a niece of McWham's, had once prepared for him a wonderful haggis, and he felt that so capable a woman could not have an incompetent son. Others explained that John McWham Macara owed his elevation to the fact that he had been brought up to the trade McWham was in, and that what he did not know about hosiery, in a manufacturing sense, could not properly be called knowledge.

Both influences may have had their contributing agencies, but it is more than probable that a newspaper report, setting forth Macara's golfing prowess, clinched matters finally. McWham's nephew had emerged victoriously from a grand open competition in which the competitors' names sounded like the roll call of the Black Watch, with Fernies, Sayers, Parks, Herds, and Kirkaldys sprinkled about hither and yon.

"One day there'll be but one firm here again, instead of two," said McWham to his nephew, who had been out a short time now. "Warrender can't hold out much longer. The bank likes the look of his paper less every day."

"Who will the lassie be?" asked Macara irrelevantly, glancing across the road admiringly at a pretty figure in a neat blue skirt and white waist in the Warrender office window. He himself was a rather taking kind of a man—medium height, lean body, but wiry. Indeed, he was all wire—wiry figure, wiry, short-cropped red-brown mustache, wiry, short-cropped reddish hair. He had a clear, red, sun-tanned skin and grayish-blue eyes that showed he was a live wire, of unusually high voltage.

From the day of his arrival, he had been administering shocks to his uncle. For instance, the old man would have had the youngster be content with a

subordinate job, with the contingency of heirship dangling before his nose like the fixed, but elusive, carrot before the ambitious donkey's. But with Scotch point and emphasis, John had declined "the substance of things hoped for" as lacking the precise kind of nourishment he desired. He wanted a present partnership, proving to his uncle that it was about market price for his value. Strangest of all, he got it.

Macara was a practical expert, who knew more about stockings than McWham ever dreamed of. He scoffed at the McWham mills—their equipment, their ancient machinery, their inefficient working—and marveled that the admirable legs of America would consent to be incased in the mercerized monstrosities that McWham foisted on them. As John said, it was nothing less than shocking that manufacturing should support so inadequately the work of nature and of grace. He so eloquently dwelt on the topic that McWham gave him his head, feeling that perhaps he had failed to do his full duty to the legs of a worthy continent; and, so far, the experiment had been abundantly successful.

"I was talking about the Warrender mill, not about lassies. Ye must be kind o' absent-minded, John," said the old man reprovingly. "That's Warrender's daughter."

"A bonnie wee lassie!" approved Macara with sincerity.

"No sae bad," conceded McWham grumpily. He slipped in and out of his native Scotch as his emotions controlled. "No sae bad, but awfu' high-toned. Walks by me as if I was a dab o' putty."

"She has that kind of a look to her," observed Macara critically. "What might she do in the office?"

"Kin' o' secretary to her father," grunted McWham. "He likes fancy names. What would be a clerk to you

or me he calls a secretary. He wears a wee watch strapped to his wrist and puts scent on his pocky hanky. I ha'e little doot but he curls his whiskers at nicht."

"Think o' that!" exclaimed Macara, his eyes on the girl.

"And him a stockinger, too!" said McWham contemptuously. "He was spoiled as a lad. When he should have been in overalls, wool sorting or lying on his back under a greasy wool comb or studying the motion of a knitting frame, he was having his nails manicured and his mustache put into curl papers, like the kaiser. A laddie that tak's his fun in the morn has to sweat before bedtime comes round."

"That's a fact!" agreed Macara. "I don't mind ever seeing a lassie with just that glinting shade of pale gold in her hair before."

"John McWham," said the elder man gravely, "ye'll ha'e to mind yir ways wi' the lassies hereabouts."

"I'll try my best," grinned the alert redhead.

"It's no lightsome topic," reproved McWham. "They set about a likely lad like tarriers on a rabbit run. Let him as much as poke the neb o' him oot, and snap! He's gaun before he can squeak. A lassie's an awfu' disconcerting creature, John. A pretty one hanging round yir neck in the watter will droon ye same as a plain one might. Kittle cattle they be. It's a silk gown, or a new hat, or a finer hoose, or a new car. First thing ye ken, a sheriff's in the hoose, and the wife's getting a divorce from ye for nonsupport."

"I understand we are not friendly with the Warrender folk?" asked John, shifting topics. "War policy, eh?"

"Friendly? No!" snarled McWham. "His father wranged me. We were pairtners. He had money; I nought but brains. When we pairted, he squeezed me badly. Fought me when

I started the bit mill, at the bank, wi' the wool merchants and machinery folks, when I needed credit. It was hard work till I got toes and fingers into the cracks and began to climb. I swore I'd get back at him—put him and his oot and have the auld mill back again. I'll dae it yet. If he offers goods at a dollar and I ken it, my price is ninety cents, and when he comes doon to ninety, I drop ten more."

"I see," said Macara. "Feud. Blood fight to the knock-out."

"Aye, that's it, John." And McWham smacked his thin old lips. "At the finish, there'll be no Warrender, only McWham & Macara."

II.

Macara sat alone in his private office, a letter before him, a smile on his face. McWham had been ordered South for the remainder of the winter. He had gone reluctantly, separating himself for a time from his beloved mills only because he realized that if he did not go, it might mean his permanent removal to a land where, according to the accepted view, the demand for hosiery is not great.

And now there was trouble with the Warrender folk. Previously there had been litigation between the firms over the pollution of the stream that flowed by the Warrenders' place to McWham's. An injunction had been obtained by McWham, restraining the Warrenders from discharging dye-house refuse into the river. There had been a recurrence of the offending, not very serious, but Macara had promptly called the attention of the offender to the breach.

The reply lay before him, with the initials M. W. under the firm signature. It was a tartish reply, intimating indirectly that McWham was making a lot of fuss about nothing. Macara glanced over the street to see who was in the

office; then decided that, in diplomacy, verbal negotiation may be superior to scraps of paper. Putting on his hat and arranging his tie, he stepped over to Warrenders'. Mr. Warrender was out of town, but Miss Warrender was in the office. Both facts Macara knew quite as well as the office boy.

"I called about that water matter, Miss Warrender," he said, after a formal introduction, frigidly received. "Your letter was not at all satisfactory, so I thought I'd come and have a talk over the matter."

"Why unsatisfactory?" she inquired.

She was wonderfully pretty in a rather overgrave way. He wished he could make her smile. It must be delightful to see her face light up. But you are limited as to jocular references when the discussion is about dyestuffs, water pollution, and drain pipes. Her hair was glorious, he reflected, on closer inspection. Some women's hair was bunchy, clotty, muddy looking; hers was fine, each hair as distinct as spun silk in an orderly skein.

"It was like a blind alley—leads nowhere," he answered. "The injunction is peremptory, very peremptory, and we cannot permit any infringement to pass. I know the tricks of dye-house help, and the rascalities of rival dyeing bosses." He assumed a very severe mien. "If the refuse were properly piped into the sewers, there would be no trouble. It is in your interest to prevent recurrence, as you are liable for damages, heavy damages."

"Do you claim damage?" she asked belligerently.

"We haven't formulated a claim yet," he said. "If we thought the injury intentional, we should take a severe view—most severe."

"You have my word that it was not intentional," she declared.

"That is amply sufficient," and he bowed magnanimously.

"I investigated the matter mor-

closely this morning. There was a leak in one of the pipes. It has been repaired," she explained.

"There is nothing more to be said. I'm glad I came across. It is well to have an understanding in these matters, and to be neighborly." He smiled.

"Neighborly!" she exclaimed. "That is a new word from McWham's."

"And I am a new man there," he replied. "You must give me the benefit of any doubt that is possible until I am proved unneighborly. Good-by, Miss Warrender. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Warrender soon."

It is hard for an unsuccessful man to be just to the successful. A beaten man is sensitive, a baffled woman much more so. The Warrenders were fighting a losing battle. With an old-fashioned equipment and scarcity of money, they were being steadily and surely driven out of the market. McWham could buy, manufacture, and consequently sell, more cheaply. It was the old muzzle-loader against the machine gun, candle against electric light, lumbering stagecoach against flying express. Macara's salesmen were pushing everywhere into new fields with attractive goods. His advertising campaign was making the firm name known from one end of the land to the other. Novelties that took the market by storm poured in a ceaseless stream from the McWham mills. By the time Warrenders caught on to a popular fashion, its day had gone, and there was something newer to catch the public eye. Old-time goods that Warrender and his father had turned out with little change were passed over by buyers who wanted something new, artistic, modern.

Now and again Macara met Warrender in a more or less formal way. Mary went little into the society of the small town, for her days were busy, and problems as to ways and means occupied much of the time she spent at

home. When the golfing season opened, Macara met her more frequently, for she was an enthusiastic player and found much needed relaxation in the game. He made many attempts to engage her for a game, but always unsuccessfully. She had invariably some excuse—a previous engagement, disinclination to play; but other men appeared to have better luck with her.

Macara overtook her one evening as she was walking home from the links.

"I wonder when you are going to give me that long-deferred game, Miss Warrender?" he asked.

"When I think I am good enough to be able to give a plus-four man a decent game," she answered evasively, with a laugh.

"That is not a very good reason."

"You would either have to give me a ridiculous handicap or play so badly intentionally that it would be worse than the severest beating."

"I've watched your game. On handicap points, we would have a good match," he argued.

"The beating would be too humiliating."

"You are too good a sportswoman to be afraid of that."

"Suppose I am quite frank, and say that I do not wish to play?" she asked, with an air of quiet decision.

"I'd be awfully sorry," he answered. "It would make me think you did not consider me worthy of your friendship."

"The conclusion would not be quite fair," she said, coloring faintly.

"I'm glad of that. I had hoped we might be friends."

She made no reply. They were nearing her home, and she was glad of it.

"Won't you let me call for you on Saturday afternoon? We'd have a real, out-and-out fight. Then we'd be real friends, I think." He smiled persuasively.

"I'm afraid I can't," she answered.

"I don't mean to be unfriendly at all, but I would rather you didn't ask me. If I seem peevish and unreasonable, be kind, and just put it down to unconquerable ill temper." To her he seemed to be the very incarnation of the evil powers that made her life hard and dark. It was unreasonable, she knew, but she could not help it. "You must surely understand, Mr. Macara," she concluded.

"Yes, I think I do," he admitted gently. "But isn't it a wee bit unfair to me—perhaps to yourself? I'll not put it down to ill temper, either. I wonder—I wonder if I could ever make you believe that I'd do anything I could to help you to feel differently about me. I mean," he laughed, "that I don't think we were meant to be enemies, fighting one another, but some ill power, or some power that seems to be treating us ill, has set us in opposed camps. I wonder if we couldn't improve things. Golf's a grand reconciler. It's the broad game of broad folks. I'm not going to ask for a match again, till—well, till something makes me fancy that my luck's changing. Good-by, Miss Warrender, you pair, wee, harassed lassie!"

She left him hurriedly, in her overwrought state midway between tears and hotly resentful anger. All night long, and for days after, the sympathetic notes of the tender Scotch voice sang through her mind like music. Then the resumption of the daily fight against the forces under his command brought back all the old hardness.

III.

When the draw for the mixed four-somes was made, Macara's name was one of the last to come out of the hat.

"Macara!" at last came the shout. "And—Miss Warrender."

There was a momentary hush in the room. Some idiot sniggered. Then

came a babel of laughing comment. Macara made his way to the place where the girl stood and held out his hand.

"I knew the luck would change," he said, for her ear alone.

She smiled and made some polite reply; then left with her father.

"Confoundedly unlucky draw!" Mr. Warrender said, as they walked home.

"I suppose I should consider myself lucky," she laughed. "Still, I almost wish I hadn't entered."

The pair ran triumphantly through the ties till they came to the final. They were a splendid combination, he master of all his weapons, far and sure, a born golfer both in style and nerve and execution; she clever especially within range of and on the green.

The morning of the day for the play-off had been unusually trying to Mary. A big order they had relied upon to turn a lot of stock into much needed cash had gone over the way to McWham's. She was fretted, irritable, nervous, and thoroughly off her game. Macara was at the top of his form, the slashing, brilliant St. Andrews style at its best. Nothing seemed impossible to him, and it was well it was so, since he had virtually to carry her around. She could do nothing right, and his unfailingly chivalrous sportsmanship made her feel worse rather than better. Their opponents were of the humdrum sane-and-safe type, and against them it was a notable performance for Macara to land his partner and himself all square at the end of the seventeenth.

It was Mary's drive from the last tee. She made a wreck of it, short and pulled into the rough. Safe-and-sane were well down the middle of the course. Macara took his cleek and, with a superb shot that brought the gallery down, laid the ball within six feet of the hole. Safe-and-sane, upset, just reached the green and, playing the

odd, were ten feet from the hole, at two more lying dead. With two for the match, Mary had but to lay the ball dead. After some nervous hesitation, she struck the ball so hard that it galloped past the hole, across the green, and dropped into a miserable guarding bunker, amid the groans of the multitude.

Macara managed to scramble it on to the green. Mary played the odd, leaving her ball four feet from the hole. At two more, Macara ran down, but it was too late. Sane-and-safe holed out and took the match and the cup.

The crowd surged over the green, all voluble sympathy for Macara, who had played the most brilliant game ever seen on the course, only to be horribly butchered by his partner. Mary, pale and agitated, moved away in profoundest misery. He caught up with her.

"Don't worry about a trifling thing like that," he laughed. "I've done the same thing lots of times. Come along, we'll stand the gaff of the presentation together. There's a silver medal for the runners-up, I'm afraid.

"Suppose we go round by the beach and escape the mob," he said when they found themselves outside again.

She felt rather helpless, so accompanied him without protest, though it was quite out of their way home. They crossed the now deserted links to the bay's edge. It was a jolly, sheltered, lonely place, and the breeze that blew in from the sea was delightfully refreshing.

"Let's sit down and talk things over," he said. "And don't look so dreadfully contrite. In golf, you've got to take everything that comes. Now you're thinking about that putt, but I'm busy with the thought of my luck in being drawn with you, and of all those ties I've been able to play with you all the week. The ice is broken, and—there's going to be no more frost."

She looked at the silver medal in her hand.

"I'd like to fling it into the sea," she said. "It's the reminder of a hateful day."

"Better keep it." He smiled. "The day isn't done yet. Now forget about that last green, or I'll think you a pot-hunter. You can't account for golfing nerves. They're part of the links' discipline."

"It wasn't nerves altogether," she answered. "The moment I had to putt, I thought of that big order from the Maclaren Stores you took away from us this morning, and—I put you into the bunker on purpose."

"I know you did," he laughed. "I saw you look viciously at me when some of those gabblers were cracking up my cleek shot. I knew you would do it. Sometimes I feel the same way, especially with smugness. I used to fire peas at my schoolmaster's bald head because he was so thunderingly good, and knew it. I must have been an awful trial to you, you poor, wee, troubled lassie. You can put me into a hundred bunkers if you like, so long as you let me partner you." He drew closer to her. "I'd sooner, Mary dear, be with you in the toughest hazard ever niblick faced than be on the fair green with anybody else."

She looked up at him, very white, but he fancied he saw a glint of sunshine.

"I loved you, lassie mine, when I wrote you that savage letter about the water pollution. When I came over and talked about damages and lectured you about injunctions, I wanted to pick you up and kiss you. It's a terrible confession to have to make, isn't it?"

His arm stole about her. She was still very pale and troubled looking.

"You don't understand how it is, Mr. Macara," she said, with a shaky kind of smile.

"Jack," he corrected, holding her more closely.

"You don't understand, Jack," she amended. "We decided this morning, father and I, that we can fight no longer. We're going into liquidation on Monday. I don't know how things will turn out. We're afraid we may not come out clean if the sale turns out badly."

"Liquidation! I doubt it," he replied. "But we'll talk that over later. What's your answer, Mary?"

"I can't, Jack. I can't. We may be broken and disgraced. If we can't pay everybody a hundred cents on the dollar, I wouldn't stay in this place. I couldn't," she said.

"We're getting away from the subject again," he answered, and to mend matters he drew her still nearer to him. "I don't care about Seascope, about knitting mills, about golf, about debtors or creditors, one snap, just now. If you express a preference for Patagonia, we'll pull up stakes and start out. There's only one absolutely necessary thing in life to me as I regard it, and it is you—just you, Mary. There's going to be no more worry of that kind for you, no more bothers about money, no more anxiety about business. That's my side of the partnership. You were never intended for a dingy old office, Mary, but just for the delight of my heart and home. Will you come to me, Mary, lassie?"

She hesitated a moment, her eyes cloudy, her lips quivering.

"Oh, Jack, I'm so tired of it all! It will be just heaven! You have seemed to be fighting against me—me, and it hurt dreadfully! And if I get irritable and bunker you sometimes?"

"Didn't I take my medicine like a man out there?" He nodded in the direction of the fatal hazard.

"Yes, like an angel," she agreed.

"The grand thing about medicine is the sweet that goes with it, or comes after," he observed.

They drew closer still, while the fly-

ing sea gulls made flip remarks to each other about the queer ways of humans.

IV.

"I want you to congratulate me, uncle," said Macara to McWham on Monday morning. "Mary Warrender has promised to marry me."

"Are ye daft? Ye've got to excuse me, John, but I dinna feel juist joke-some the day," complained the old man. "I've no got over that putt that lost ye the cup on Saturday. It cam' near bunkering me for gude. John, it was no slip, but juist de'llilike pairvairse-ness—female pairvairse-ness."

"I've seen Jim Braid do as bad many a time, and as for Johnny Ball!" laughed Macara. "If a lassie hasn't the right to bunker her future husband when she wants to, what's to become of the whole question of women's rights? Maybe she was just testing me. I came through with full marks—passed, and nothing needed but the minister's diploma."

"Which o' the twa of us is the crazy yin?" demanded McWham. "Ye talk, John, like an addled egg!"

"I'm telling you the plain fact. I'm going to marry Mary Warrender," asserted Macara.

"Then we pairt!" snarled McWham. "Ye can juist gang to the de'il yir ain gait."

"I'm pretty well used to my own gait," smiled Macara. "Better call up the accountants and get the partnership affairs straightened out. I'd like it done quick, for I can use the money."

"I reckon ye do this because I'm an auld, auld man," whimpered McWham.

"No, but because I'm a young, young one," laughed Macara. "I like the business here well enough; the mills are rounding into good fettle; we're opening up grand markets. All those things are important in a way. But business is one thing, the lassie another." The

implication was that business was rather a drossy thing.

"I'll ha'e the accountants in and we'll square up," said McWham furiously. "This prankie has cost ye better than a million!"

"Not an unreasonable price," said Macara, dropping into dialect in his earnestness. "I'm like the McWhams that way—I dinna mind price when I'm satisfied wi' my bargain. Ye ken aboot the man and the pearl o' great price? He sold all he had to get it. His modern name is John McWham Macara. I'll get my bit things ready in the office. Maybe I'll send a laddie ower to fetch 'em later."

"Ower from whaur?" demanded McWham.

"I'll likely be ower the road," said John. "They need a bit lift. The business has an auld name, and if modernized——"

"They're next door to bankruptcy!" interrupted McWham.

"Hoots! Siller'll cure that," scoffed Macara. "I'm no a beggar. I can get all the money I want for new mills, after what we've done here in a few months. Then there's my share o' the partnership. What I've done this side o' the road I can do on the other."

"And ye'll build the Warrenders up wi' my money?" screamed McWham.

"No, with mine," answered John. "Ye told me the other day I had doubled the place's worth."

Macara was fussing with papers at his desk when McWham shuffled in.

"John," he whined, "I'm an auld, auld man."

"Aye, nane on us grows younger," replied his nephew with chill philosophy.

"To be beat on the eighteenth is sair wark," McWham moaned.

"Ten down and eight to play is worse," observed Macara.

"Aye, laddie, but to be stymied when

ye've the game as good as won!" lamented the old man.

"But, uncle, man, you've got to be a philosopher if you're a golfer, else you are nothing but a divot cutter mis-called," returned Macara. "A good man wi' the putter has ways o' twisting round a stymie. I mind Willie Park, at the Himalayas hole at Prestwick——"

"Ne'er mind aboot Wullie Park!" snapped McWham. "Ye've got something on yir mind, John?"

"Yes, I have," said Macara. "First, Mr. Warrender's no business man, and kens as much about stockings as he does about the plumbing in the mansions of the New Jerusalem. Second, he's solvent—no working capital, but a fair, old-fashioned plant that can be put in shape, not over expensively. Third, there's a good mill in running order. Fourth, ye do not want a local rival if ye can help it. Fifth, you've been crazy for years to have the two mills one. Sixth, ye'll have to build soon, or demand will attend to the matter of supply, and here's a mill not sixty feet away, in running order. I've as many heads to my discourse as a Free Kirk dominie."

"Gang on, John!" said McWham, his head bent in thought.

"You'll buy, or we'll buy, Warrender out, lock, stock, and barrel, at fair valuation," said Macara.

"Better let him crack. It'll be cheaper under the sheriff's hammer," suggested McWham.

"There'll be no sheriff's hammer," replied Macara. "What would hurt the lassie badly would hurt me worse. That's part of the price you will have to pay if I stay here. If we don't buy as a firm, I'll buy as John Macara."

"Gang forrit, John McWham," said the old man, attentive again.

"There'll be enough money for Mr. Warrender to retire on comfortably. He'll be able to live at his ease with

his books and flowers," explained Macara. "We will add a much needed mill to the business, and building costs money these days. That's the way round the stymie. The Warrenders will be out, the two firms one, the old mill yours again. What more could any man want of ambition's fulfillment this side Jordan's flood? The point now to be settled is: McWham & Macara, both sides of the road, or McWham this side, Macara the other."

"The one firm, John, for I'm an auld, auld man. Shake hands, laddie. Fix it wi' Warrender as ye wull. What ye

say goes. There's no holding a lad that can win through oot of a bunker. Ask the bit lassie to come to see me one day and tell me about bunkerin' ye. She's juist the image o' her grandmother. Aye, John, get wed sune. I'm an auld, auld man, and the wee yins bring back the days that were, as well as promise for those to be. I was a bit disappointed at first, John, but I'm satisfied the noo."

"That's golf!" said John, in high commendation and, taking up his hat, he stepped over the way, for he had seen a face at the window.



CONFESSION

I MUST not tell you all my heart is holding,
 They warn, the cheaply wise;
 I must hide joy, beloved, shrewdly folding
 My love in little lies,

Defenses, half desire. I see no flowers
 Turn from the sun's gold shrine;
 They live and give frank beauty for their hours—
 And shall I barter mine?

Myself withholding, I may lure and keep you?
 Then, royally, I lose!
 What though my wave of giving break to sweep you
 Away from me? I choose

To make with love one great, immortal gesture,
 Incomparable and free,
 Tear from my heart its last mysterious vesture;
 For you, no mystery!

You may forget, may turn to lesser caring.
 Loving, long years, alone,
 The splendid, wind-swept rush of passion's daring
 I shall have known!

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



Glow of Gold

By Lucy Stone Terrill

Author of "Orchids and Dandelions," etc.

SHE did not recognize him during the first act—she was so busy knitting on a gray army sweater. Kennerly had watched her covertly when she had come in, wrapped in a luxurious blue cloak, bowing carelessly to a friend here and there in the boxes. Now that he thought of it, Kennerly remembered that he never pictured Jean apart from that delicately bright blue color which helped to deepen a trifle the blueness of her laughing eyes. But the blues that he remembered were of gingham and white-dotted dimities, and not of velvets and chiffons and silks. He had wondered through all the years if she had found the pleasures of life she had gone away to seek, and now he saw that she had. He had been uncomfortably conscious of his rough, well-made business suit—people all about him were in evening clothes—but he lost his discomfort in watching Jean and in the unsought memories that swept over him at this sudden sight of her.

During the entire first act, she had scarcely spoken to her tall, elderly escort; but the man, wholly bored with the play and half dozing, had roused himself several times to lean toward her, perhaps to touch her arm and mutter some remark or to draw her cloak up about her shoulders.

They were beautiful, naked shoulders, but they were the shoulders of a well-matured woman. They had been the slender, dimpled shoulders of a girl—when Kennerly had kissed them.

Near the close of the second act, the elderly man left his seat. Kennerly heard him say:

"You don't mind if I go smoke a while, Jeanie? This stuff puts me to sleep."

"Of course not. It is dull," she replied unconcernedly.

And a little later, she recognized Kennerly. He felt her start slightly, knew that she was scrutinizing him closely, and then she spoke, quietly, as if it had been a day and not twenty-five years since she had seen him.

"Why, hello, old Freddy Freckles!"

"Hello, Jean!" he returned placidly, turning a little in his seat to smile down at the lovely face beside him.

"Why, you old wretch—have you known me all this time?"

"Yes."

"Oh. Your nose is still freckled. Why have you kept them?"

"To remember you by. Your hair is still auburn. Why have you done it?"

"That's mean, Freddy Freckles! I know now that you haven't forgiven me."

"Oh, yes, I have," he contradicted, avoiding her eyes. "That is, if there was anything to forgive, I forgave it long ago."

"I've always hoped you had," she said softly, returning to her knitting. "Tell me about you. Have you lived in Pemberton all this while?"

"Yes," he said, smiling. "We have three paved streets now, and a half-dozen street cars, and——"

"Funny little Pemberton!" she interrupted. "You used to meet me at White's grocery corner after Christian Endeavor—remember?"

"Y-es," he said unwillingly. "How does it happen that *you* remember?"

"Because I couldn't forget. I didn't go away, if you remember, because I had stopped loving you."

He bent nearer her to catch her low words and breathed the faint sweetness that rose from her bare throat and arms.

"Oh, Jean," he whispered, "you—you lie so," he finished heroically, and they both laughed, looking into each other's eyes.

"I do not. I haven't forgotten *one thing*—honest, cross my heart, and hope to die," she denied, in the vernacular of their youth, reverting to her whimsical, jesting mood. "And I haven't forgotten your beautiful, fierce black pompadour, even if it is all gone."

He rubbed his hand over his bald head. She had always tormented him by her flights from jest to earnest.

"Yes," he admitted. "But I'm not so bad for a man nearly fifty, do you think?"

"Oh, perfect conceit! What about the way I've disciplined my forty-five years?"

"You are stouter," he declared judicially.

"You certainly hate me, Freddy Freckles, but you put it kindly. The fact is, I'd be indecently fat if I didn't exercise every second that I'm not in public. I'm even having reducing machines installed in my limousine."

His lips twitched slightly, but he said in all gravity:

"I'm glad you have a limousine, Jean—and I'm properly impressed. I think you put it very subtly, and I'm sure your husband is a millionaire and very proud of his beautiful wife. He looked a most distinguished old gentleman, and I noticed he took distinct

pleasure in putting your cloak about you." He was quickly sorry that he had used the word "old."

She flushed, but her laughter was sincere.

"I don't deserve all that, truly I don't. I guess it's a good thing I didn't marry you. You'd probably have beaten me."

"Of course it's a good thing. You would have killed me. After all these years, all I have is a secondhand automobile and a motor cycle."

"Have they been happy years?"

"Yes, in many ways. Sometimes——" He stopped abruptly.

"Sometimes—*what?*" She leaned forward eagerly and put her hand on his arm.

"Sometimes—I've missed your laughter."

She did not lower her surprised eyes and he saw them fill with tears, but she replied lightly:

"What a pretty thing to say—for a bald-headed man, especially! Tell me, whom did you marry, Fred?"

"Edith Latimer."

He reddened slightly at her surprised "What? Quiet, tiny Edith! Did you—I mean have you always lived in the house you built—for me?"

"Oh, no. I sold it. We built another one, over on Elm Street—a big, roomy, old house. I'll bet it'll look like a wreck when we get home, too. You see, we've got an army cantonment out at Pemberton, so we loaned our house for the soldiers to play in while we're gone."

"It's queer to think of this war affecting little old Pemberton," she mused, smiling. "But I suppose you're all buying Liberty Bonds, and using honey in your coffee, and making just the same sacrifices as we are here."

He shrugged his shoulders, tolerantly amused.

"I wonder if you've ever sacrificed anything in your life," he said slowly, a note of sincere curiosity in his voice,

which she answered with a slight touch of chagrin.

"Well, not if you consider that I ought to go hungry and wear shoes with holes in them, *but* I've knitted for seven solid months—and I bought Liberty Bonds enough to fill a trunk, and we've given our town house for a neighborhood house for sailors, and we've donated two hospital ambulances, and adopted half of the Belgian children and all of the Serbians, and given ten or fifteen thousand dollars to anybody that asked for it—and—and a few little things like that."

"Yes, mere trifles," he assented humorously. "How you *have* loved your money, haven't you, Jean?"

She raised her eyes inquiringly, without a trace of annoyance, for beneath his banter was an unquestionable wistfulness.

"Yes," she admitted simply. "I had to have it. But sometimes——"

She hesitated over the word just as he had done, giving it the same reflective emphasis.

"Sometimes—*what?*" he said unwillingly.

"Sometimes I've wished *you* could have given it to me."

She flushed under his steady, mocking gaze, but he said gently:

"A safe enough wish, Jean. I don't suppose I have money enough in the bank to buy this evening wrap you're wearing. But, after all, we've had a good deal out of life—Edith and I. We've made some pretty stiff sacrifices, but we've been paid for them, one way or another. But *now*, when we thought life looked pretty pleasant—we've got to meet our share of this war."

"Do you consider it an economical war measure to come to the theater—alone?" she observed dryly. "These are fairly good seats, too."

"No, that's a measure I haven't employed yet," he answered in a peculiar voice. "Edith and the boys are up there

in the second row. We couldn't get seats together, so I came back here. It's pretty hard on mother—I mean Edith—to have them leave. They sail any day now, so we came East to all play round together before they go. We couldn't give two hospital ambulances, but—but we're doing the best we can."

The face of the woman beside him changed curiously as her eyes followed his gaze to the second row, where a tiny woman sat between her two big sons—their broad, uniformed young shoulders rising far above hers and both of their sleek black heads leaning a little toward her gray one. Her hair was waved loosely and coiled about her head.

"Her hair is gray, but it's pretty, isn't it?" Kennerly said boyishly.

Jean flushed hotly, and her slender, jeweled fingers fumbled with her knitting.

"Why, Freddy Freckles!" she murmured awkwardly. "It—I—it hadn't occurred to me that you had children—men! How—how splendid! But you mustn't scold me about the ambulances. My boy—he's only twenty—has been in France four months. I wasn't meaning to—to boast."

Amazed admiration leaped into the man's eyes.

"And I'd been pitying you because you hadn't any children!" he said impetuously. "God knows it's hard—but—but it's going to be worth it, *somehow*."

"Oh, yes."

She struggled to pick up a stitch in her knitting. He watched her, wondering, and she looked up at him and smiled.

"So many kinds of 'bits' to do, aren't there?"

He nodded.

"But the grandest 'bit' is our sons," she said softly.

His throat burned and he looked

away. An usher came and handed her a note.

"I must go, old Freddy Freckles. My husband is all 'smoked out,' and we're both tired to-night. He's waiting."

Kennerly put her cloak about her and breathed again the fragrance of her hair. Finally he found words, stupidly commonplace ones:

"Good-by, Jean. Best luck."

"Good-by. I pray—for *both* of you—that your boys will return."

"And yours," he said huskily, and she bent her head, but her smile was brave. There seemed almost a pain in his hand when hers had left it. He did not watch her go. But, suddenly he

knew that the people directly back of him were speaking of her.

"Yes, damned handsome, all right, but about as much heart in her as in a machine gun."

"If Jean had had any children, it would have made a great difference," answered a woman's kindly, elderly voice.

Kennerly sat on through the third act, his right hand clenched tightly about a small, fragrant handkerchief that had fallen as she had risen to go. But he dropped it on the floor and covered it with his foot while he stood waiting for a tiny, sweet-faced woman and his two sons in khaki.



THE HILL ROAD

LITTLE road that climbs the hill, will your windings bring to me
Scent of wildling apple bloom or whisper of the sea?
Clear from green-gloomed hemlock shade will a veery sing to me,
Or from rain-sweet pasture steal the whitethroats' melody?

Little road that climbs the hill, will your questing hold for me
Lamp-lit pane and glowing hearth, or a fern-sweet bed?
Does your luring promise ease, pleasure shine, and gold for me,
Or a beggar's homeless trail threading far, instead?

Little road that climbs the hill, do you know what hides for me
Past your spring-blurred crest that lifts against the Maytime blue?
Never can my seeking heart guess what fortune bides for me;
Only know I sun and wind, drifting clouds—and you!

Friendly sun that beckons on, comrade winds that call to me,
Vagrant clouds that challenge me above a spring-sweet land,
North or south or east or west, naught more dear could fall to me,
With a little climbing road to take me by the hand.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



Cheaters

By William Almon Wolff

Author of "Fargo of the Gaudy Lake," etc.

STEPHEN CARROLL walked along the sands of Burnstable, among the dunes. The sand was hot; his bare feet were unaccustomed to its contact after three weeks of city pavements, and it burned them abominably. He lifted them gingerly and set them down tenderly, hence with an extraordinary silence, at each step. He had a destination; it had been uncertain, indefinite, but the sight of a girl who sat and watched the ocean had placed it for him. His destination was the dune that sheltered her. Like him, she wore a bathing suit; again like him, a sweater, too. He couldn't see her face, but about her back there was something elusively familiar, and he stopped, intrigued, pleasantly mystified.

He knew who she was. She was Kathleen Adair, and Molly Randall's guest; for the rest of the waning summer, Burnstable was to be the richer by her presence. But he did not know these things about her empirically, so to speak; they had been told to him. And he was puzzled by his feeling that he had seen this girl before, since he was so sure that he had not. He had come back that afternoon to Burnstable, after three weeks in town; she had arrived, two or three days earlier, from Detroit, or St. Louis, or wherever it was she lived—he couldn't remember that detail of what had been said about her. He wished that girls in bathing suits, particularly when you spied on

them from behind, didn't look so much alike.

She must look like some one else, he supposed. She had taken off her cap; he could see her hair—a rich, ruddy brown, touched by the setting sun. It was full of the same coppery tints that were Peggy Armstrong's one claim to beauty. But Peggy was short and—well, it wouldn't be fair to call her fat, perhaps, but she wasn't—thin. And this girl was tall and slim, with long, silken legs and slender ankles, and she leaned back upon delicate arms that reminded him, in their firm molding, of young birches on a wind-swept hill. He gave it up, took a step forward.

"Oh, Miss Adair!" he said. "They sent me for you. You're to come in my boat, you know——"

She turned, with a smile, to face him. Immediately the aplomb of Steve Carroll, which was not without a certain celebrity, deserted him. All he could do, as that smile froze upon Miss Adair's wholly charming lips, was to stand there, gaping, his jaw fallen, his whole expression akin to that which a dog, caught in the act of killing sheep, might wear.

"Glory!" he said. "Oh—gee! Miss Adair—I——"

And then, suddenly and, it seemed, quite involuntarily, as a sort of reflex action, he grinned. In another moment, to his own horror and consternation, he actually laughed.

"I—I really am ashamed and sorry!" he gasped. "I—have been—all the time! Don't think I'm not because I'm l-laughing! But it is funny!"

"Really?" she said coldly. "I'm so sorry, but my sense of humor is very rudimentary, I'm sometimes told. I suppose you are Stephen Carroll?"

She might have said that in such a way as to produce in Steve a warm glow of pride and pleasure, but she did not. Her tone was—condemnatory, disparaging. Her eyebrows rose, too, and she surveyed him in some such fashion as that used by an efficient judge, bent upon giving all their rigors to the mandates of the law, when he glares at a convicted felon before pronouncing sentence.

"Oh, Lord!" said Steve helplessly, and stopped laughing.

Miss Adair rose, then, and looked at him. Steve had formed a high opinion, a very high opinion, of this lady's looks upon the occasion of his first encounter with her. (He knew, now, why her back had been so familiar as he had approached her!) But he could see how grossly, how culpably, he had underestimated her attractions. Great pains had been taken with this young woman; few things had been overlooked. You might have said, seeing her just then for the first time, that she was a little too cold, too severe; that her beauty, while undeniable, would have pleased you more had it been a trifle less perfect, a little warmer. But, of course, she was angry then, and very much upon her dignity.

"I— Gee, I don't know what to say!" said Steve wretchedly. "You see—I had no idea—I—that is—"

He dared not look at her, even. It might have occurred to him, but, if it did, he knew better than to show it, that any girl who had in her any humanity at all must have been moved to some sort of sympathy for his utter, his abject abasement. And perhaps this

was true, even in the case of the glacial Miss Adair. Perhaps something more than mere satisfaction accounted for the faint twitching of the corners of her mouth, for the mutinous dimple that was on view, for just a second, before she sternly ordered it back into retirement. Almost any one might have felt sorry for Steve, indeed, in that moment. He stood first upon one foot, then upon the other.

"You see," he said awkwardly, when it became plain that if the silence were to be broken, it must be by him, "it's rather messy all around, Miss Adair. I'm afraid the others have started by this time—"

"Then we'd better be going, too, don't you think, Mr. Carroll?" she suggested, very evenly.

He grew scarlet in his relief and delight.

"Oh, I say—I knew you were a good sport!" he burst out. "Then you are coming with me? That's bully of you, Miss Adair—simply corking! I know I made an awful break—but this means you're going to forgive me, doesn't it?"

Her expression showed him that that wasn't the idea at all; that he had missed his cue—come in, so to speak, on the wrong note. He let his voice tail off.

"There's nothing to forgive, Mr. Carroll," she said quietly. "That you suggest—that you think of it— You—you see, you imply an utterly impossible relation, Mr. Carroll!"

"But—if you're coming with me—"

"I'm not in the least afraid of you, Mr. Carroll!" she flashed. "And, unless you're extremely stupid, you should be able to understand. I'm to be Mrs. Randall's guest. I don't want to spoil my visit and make her unhappy by telling her of the extraordinary experience you forced upon me the first time I saw you. And I'm obliged to rely upon you to make it unnecessary

to explain what will be called—shall we say my dislike of you?"

"That—well, that's plain enough, of course," said Steve, his color rising a little. "And it's coming to me, too——"

"Thank you! I feel I have the right to ask some things of you. You quite understand, do you not, Mr. Carroll? I'll go with you, in your boat, to Molly's clambake. When we're coming back, I shall manage to be in another boat. It will be taken for granted that, now that we have met, we've found that we are not at all congenial, in spite of the absurd way in which people have been praising each of us to the other? You do understand, don't you?"

They had begun to walk slowly along the beach, but now Carroll stopped and looked at her with a certain show of indignation.

"Understand?" he echoed. "I do not! And what's more, I won't! You—why—you're the most congenial thing I ever saw in all my life. I'm going to spend all the rest of this summer and just as many more springs and summers and autumns and winters as it takes to make you understand why I made such a juggins of myself in town the other day—why I really wasn't quite accountable! I certainly won't try to make people think I don't like you, because—because——"

She sighed, with a certain show of resignation.

"Every one told me how clever you were," she said, rather scornfully. "So far, you haven't let me see any cleverness for myself. Really, Mr. Carroll, don't you think I am being rather nicer to you than you deserve? Leaving your rather offensive suggestion of your regard for me out of the question, don't you think I'm in a position to name my own terms? If I'm prepared to spare you the embarrassment of telling Mrs. Randall how you tried to—to—'pick me up,' the other day, don't you think

you ought to follow any suggestion I make?"

It was his turn to sigh.

"I beg your pardon," he said, utterly crushed at last. "You're absolutely right, of course. I ought to be tarred—or feathered—or something! But—oh, well, I'd almost rather have you tell Molly the whole thing than——" He caught her eye. "Oh, all right!" he said unhappily. "I'll be good!"

Thereafter they walked along in an uncompanionable silence until they came to his boat. She accepted his solicitous attention to her comfort in the matter of cushions and a coat with an indifference that chilled him; she froze him, as they ran across the bay, every time he tried to talk. Not until they had almost reached their destination did she condescend to speak.

"I suppose," she said pensively, "that you'll be asked how you like me. I'll leave the details to you—but you find me rather stupid, don't you, Mr. Carroll, and—well—distinctly unattractive?"

He glared at her, with the first show of spirit he had been able to muster for some time.

"I do not!" he said darkly. "Look here—I'm at your mercy. I'll lie to these people, if you make me do it, but I'm hanged if I'll lie to you! You've got a real brain, and when it comes to looks, you've got every girl in Burnstable skinned to death! I'd give all I own for a chance to paint you, right now. And what's more, you're a good sport, even if you are hitting me when I'm down. And some day——"

"Spare my blushes, please," said Miss Adair. She examined him coolly, critically. "I'm sorry I can't return your compliments in kind, Mr. Carroll. You're the sort of man I've always particularly disliked. As to looks and—well, other things. I'm quite sure I shouldn't have liked you, even if you hadn't tried to introduce yourself to me

by trying to—pick me up. *Is that the correct phrase, Mr. Carroll?*"

"Please!" she said, with a groan, scarlet again. "Won't you understand that I knew right away what an insane thing that was? Don't you think you've punished me almost enough for that asinine performance?"

"Punished?" she said, her lifted eyebrows eloquent. "How you do dwell on that absurd idea! You're not being punished at all! If you really have any of the regard you profess for my feelings, try not to be melodramatic, Mr. Carroll!"

Taking one consideration with another, Steve Carroll did not greatly enjoy that clambake; or the moonlight bathing that, in due season, followed it; or the ride home, or anything about the party. He hadn't been quite as low in his mind as he had seemed to be, in the boat, because he had had an idea that, since they were so late, he would be able to have Miss Adair to himself a good deal, whether she was willing or no. But he had underestimated her. In some mysterious fashion, she got away from him at once. She and Molly Randall coalesced for a moment, and in about two minutes, a callow youth named Bill Anderson, who would never, of his own volition, have dreamed of monopolizing a visiting girl of such charm as Kathleen Adair, was taking her off and trying, in a bewildered fashion, to realize his good fortune. Steve got Peggy Armstrong. Peggy was a good sort, and all that, but—

Later, people kept asking him how he liked Miss Adair. They assumed, of course, that he had had a chance to form an opinion; they didn't understand—most pointedly they didn't understand—his backwardness about expressing it. He squirmed. He was no fool, though he acted like one at times. He knew perfectly well the meaning of all the things Molly Randall had been saying about Kathleen Adair; knew,

too, the sort of missionary work she had been doing, the hints she had been dropping about giving him and Kathleen a chance to like one another. He could see all sorts of complications looming up.

The worst of it all was, of course, that he knew it was all absolutely his own fault. What an ass he had been! Of course, he couldn't know—couldn't have known—when he saw Miss Adair in New York and followed his crazy impulse, that she was the girl for whom Molly Randall had been acting as advance agent. But that didn't let him out—not in a thousand years! He flushed again, all alone though he was, when he was lying awake that night, going over the whole beastly business, at the memory of the way he had behaved.

Of course, it was sheer bad luck that had brought his chickens home to roost in this fashion, but he was fain-minded enough to admit that it served him right. He had acted like an unspeakable cad; that his motives had been wholly pure and moderately lofty didn't alter that.

Steve, as may have been mentioned, was a painter. He was a pretty good painter, too. And if you wanted to make him thoroughly mad, all you had to do was to say something about the artistic temperament in his hearing. He refused to concede that there was any such animal. For himself, for example, he was wont to maintain, he needed no temperament to excuse anything he did or didn't do. So far as circumstances permitted, he explained, he did as he jolly well pleased, and any one who disapproved had full permission to keep on disapproving.

When he felt like painting and the bills were pretty well cleaned up, he got busy and painted his head off. When the rent was due and the butcher looked nervous, he got equally busy and painted for money—portraits, as a rule

of course—and he got the money. Temperament? Nothing to it! Thus Steve.

And yet—there were those—and they included Molly Randall—who weren't prepared to admit that Steve was without temperament. Why, for example, had he deserted Burnstable to spend three parching weeks in New York, painting and sketching in East Side streets, at Coney Island, in the parks? He had vowed, in June, that he meant to loaf all summer. He'd had a particularly good winter and spring, and had made all sorts of money. There had been a steady demand for portraits, and, beside that, he was beginning to catch on, and quite a lot of things he had painted simply to please himself had been sold, at good prices.

So there was that for evidence of Steve's temperament, despite his profane disclaimer. Again, he had certain theories of life and conduct. And it was the combination of those theories with the heat and the loneliness of New York at night in August, when he couldn't work, that had betrayed him in the matter of Miss Adair. Had there been any one at all in town for him to play with, he never would have succumbed to his idiotic impulse.

His idea hadn't seemed so unreasonable, in the beginning. Miss Adair had been staying at his hotel—shopping had kept her in town a couple of days, he could suppose, now, on her way to Burnstable. It had seemed to him rather ridiculous that he and she should continue to suffer alone when each might contribute to the other's enjoyment. That had involved, as he could see now, rather large assumptions. He had assumed, for example, that Miss Adair was bored and discontented, and nothing could have been farther from the truth. She had, as a matter of fact, been having a singularly good time. The shops had been open to her; so had a plethoric bank account. But he hadn't thought of that.

Then he had had a sort of desire for a tilt at convention. He had had a notion of trying to prove that a man and a girl, temporarily at loose ends, might meet, drift together for a few days—joining forces in amusing assaults upon the eternal enemy, time—and then drift apart, as two men might do. He would have banished sentiment, the very shadow of it, from their intercourse, save, perhaps, at their last meeting—at a table on a roof garden, say, with soft music in the air about them and flowers between them.

But it had turned out that Miss Adair was not, that most emphatically she was not, the sort of girl with whom such an idea may be tested.

And he could see, now, in the still watches of the night—whatever they may be—that it had never been much of an idea, anyway. Had Miss Adair had a bad complexion, or a poor figure, or a squint— The trouble was that those saving thoughts were rather belated in their advent.

The next morning Molly Randall demanded an accounting. She made Steve swim out with her to a rock known to them both of old, in the days, long before Randall had turned up, when Steve and Molly had flirted rather desperately together.

"What did you do to Kathleen, Steve?" asked Molly. "She loathes you! And I know her well enough to know that she'd have liked you, as I meant she should, if you hadn't behaved like a beast!"

"Oh, come, Molly!" said Steve. "That's a bit thick! People don't always fall for the people you think they will, you know. Miss Adair—well, she's a nice girl, of course, and all that, but she didn't make such a whale of a hit with me, if you must know it!"

He squirmed as he uttered that monstrous heresy. And he couldn't have been very convincing, either, because Molly, basking luxuriously on the rock

in the hot sun and looking like a sleek young seal, stuck out her tongue at him.

"Stuff!" she said. "And nonsense! I know you as well as I do Bob, Steve! I can read you like big print. I know why you like girls and why you don't. Kathleen was made for you. What's more, you do like her, and the reason you're lying is that you know she doesn't like you, and you don't want to be laughed at!"

Steve uttered the ribald sounds to which the male has recourse when he wants to make a woman think her intuitive processes haven't functioned properly and knows that if he trusts to speech, it will betray him.

"There's just one thing, Steve," Molly went on pensively. "I do want you—I did want you—and Kathleen to—well, to like each other. But—she's the best friend I ever had, and I haven't seen her for three years, and I won't have her bothered into going home ahead of time. So—you behave! If I can square things for you, I'll do it, but don't you try."

"You're too darned deep," said Steve. "You'll fall into yourself some time, Molly, and never be able to climb out! I'm sorry if your feelings are hurt, but if you want to know the truth, this is the first prospect I've seen of having a little peace since you started boosting Miss Adair!"

"Very good!" said Molly. "You do like to hear yourself talk, don't you, Steve? Of course you don't expect me to believe you?"

"Well, I can't help that," he said sullenly.

Molly was right. Steve didn't want to be laughed at. He ran pretty true to the male type in that respect. He'd about decided on the line he meant to take with Kathleen Adair. He liked her, he admired her, but he had rather lost his head the day before. In the morning light, he felt that it would be unnecessary—would be carrying things

too far, altogether—for him to fall in love with her.

Steve was no callow, impressionable boy. He had singed his wings two or three times since the ending of his affair with Molly Randall, and he had come to be nicely wary of the flame. He did have a way with women, undoubtedly, but enough shocking things have been revealed about him. He didn't do things that were—unpleasant. He was cautious—that was all. And if he were going to fall in love, there was certainly every reason why it should not be with Kathleen Adair. He was quite sure of that.

So—he fell in love with her! Head over heels, he fell in love with her! At the end of two wretched weeks, he had only just enough sense left to be sure that the only chance he had with her lay in playing a waiting game. Angels would find the treading pretty difficult on the road he wanted to follow; he gritted his teeth and determined not to play the part of the fool who rushed in.

Things weren't easy for him. To begin with, in Burnstable, where there weren't so many people, anyway, and all there were were intimate and went around together pretty much all the time, he couldn't help seeing a good deal of Kathleen Adair. And though they were, in a measure, lost so far as Steve was concerned, because he was so soon, so hopelessly involved, an impartial observer, acquainted with all the facts, would have been compelled to admire without reserve the methods of Miss Adair.

She didn't snub Steve. Not she! She knew a trick worth two of that. She was absolutely pleasant to him, even nice. But she was nice to him as a girl is nice to a man who doesn't count, who never can or will count. She made no effort to avoid him. When she couldn't, without being pointed about it, escape a seat in his car, a trip in his boat on some excursion, an occasional pairing

with him at golf or tennis, she took them easily, smiling. The idea seemed to be that she had put him in his place, and that she was willing to trust him to keep it, despite his unsavory record.

But so far as Steve was concerned, nothing made any difference. He was done for, and he knew it. He might fool the crowd; he might even bring an uncertain frown to Molly Randall's eyes at times, but he knew. He had opportunities to observe that dimple, permitted to show itself, now, for the benefit of more favored swains, and to see that the lady's severe and classic beauty had its tempered moments, when amusement and good cheer relaxed the severity of her aspect.

She even had serious talks with him, which, on her part, were sheer, premeditated brutality, because they completed the wreck of what had been a happy life. Steve had made no mistake when he had told her that she had a brain. She had. And, moreover, she could talk to him—and intelligently—about painting. She knew a good deal about art, and what she liked, too, and she needed no one to tell her what she ought to like. She pricked, with a single word, the bubble of conceit that had kept him up about a certain picture of his. Looking at it, she smiled and had to be pressed to speak.

"You had a good idea," she said, "but you didn't carry it out. And you've a pretty picture, with a lot of good drawing and some nice values—but without any idea behind it. Intention and execution didn't get together quite, did they?"

It is, perhaps, significant that the fury he couldn't conceal at that criticism evoked the first really interested look she had given him since the hour of their second meeting.

It steadied him. He stopped being angry almost at once, of course. But somehow that incident helped him to find himself and do some sane, clear

thinking about his situation. He made up his mind, quite definitely, that life without Kathleen Adair would be a howling waste. And plainly, all too plainly, being abject wasn't going to get him anywhere. What would? That, precisely, was what he didn't know, couldn't find out—what maddened him.

On a sudden impulse, he went off for two weeks with Jimmy Hepburn, cruising along the coast as far as Bar Harbor and back. He and Hepburn were good enough friends to need no speech. Twice, a working fit took hold of him, and Jimmy sat about patiently, with a full-sail breeze going utterly to waste, smoking a pipe and watching him and, when he got tired of doing that, making small repairs. There was a sort of awe in Steve's eyes when he looked over the results of his work.

"Good Lord!" he said. "Jimmy! Did I paint that? Did you see me do it? Because, if you didn't, I won't believe it's mine. I can't paint like that!"

"Sure you did," said Jimmy tolerantly. "It's a pretty picture, too, Steve. Funny you never tried any sea stuff before. Shouldn't wonder if we could get the Casino to buy it. I'll bring it up at the next meeting of the governors."

Steve said nothing. The ghost of an idea had flashed into his mind.

"Let's beat it back, Jimmy—d'you mind?" he said, a little later.

Jimmy didn't mind, and they went back. Things were stirring in Burnstable, and the ghost of an idea that Steve had had to do with that stir. There had been talk, before he left with Hepburn, of a sort of bazaar at the Casino, for some charity. In his absence, it had crystallized, as he had guessed it would, since Molly Randall had been interested in it. Now nothing else was talked about. He was on the Randall veranda on the night of his return, and Molly was planning, eagerly.

"We'll raffle off as many things as we

can," she said. "You can start raffles ahead of time——"

He waited a while.

"Want a portrait?" he asked casually. His eyes were on Kathleen Adair.

"Whose?" asked Molly.

"Any one's," he said. "I'll do a portrait of whoever holds the lucky number—try to, anyhow."

"Steve—you're a dear!" said Molly. "Kathleen—wouldn't it be great?"

"It's rather reckless, I should think," said Kathleen. "Suppose the winner were some one—well, some one you didn't see? As a painter, I mean."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It wouldn't be as good, of course," he said. "But when it comes to portraits—well, we can't all choose our sitters, as Sargent does. I could take a chance, I think. There aren't many people here I wouldn't more or less enjoy painting."

Miss Adair smiled. But she had nothing more to say. And Molly, a good deal excited, since this was, unquestionably, to be the grand prize of her lotteries, wasn't a bit disturbed. Steve was restored to favor forthwith. He suspected, from an added coolness in Miss Adair's manner toward him, that Molly had been indiscreet. But he didn't care—now. And he amazed Molly by the helpful interest he took in the bazaar—something altogether unprecedented, for him. It had long been his habit to jeer at such things.

He did, before the bazaar opened, about half the work. He took complete charge, for example, of the raffles—did posters advertising them, for which people promptly began offering fancy prices; made the slips; arranged for the drawings, all of which were to be held on the night of the bazaar. And he thought of at least a dozen new and unassailable ways of inducing people to part with their money without actual violation of the statutes against

grand and petty larceny, in such cases made and provided.

The bazaar was a howling success. It made almost enough money to justify the work and the heartburning and the labor that had gone into it—not quite enough, of course, but almost. And toward the end of the evening, some one made a speech, extolling Steve for his generosity, and he got red, and made indignant sounds down in his throat; and Molly—looking wonderful, because she was the sort who did look wonderful when all her physical strength was gone and she was subsisting upon her nerves—announced the drawing for the portrait Steve was to paint.

Steve brought the great brass-bowl in which the slips were jumbled together. He made a great ceremony of mixing them up, and Molly drew one out and read the number. Everywhere papers rustled; all over the great dancing floor talk, which had been hushed, buzzed. And suddenly, in a distant corner, there was an outburst of laughter and exclamations. Steve and Molly looked over toward that corner; they saw Kathleen Adair being pushed forward. In her hand she held a slip; she was laughing, deprecating, confused.

"Steve!" said Molly. "It's Kathleen you've got to paint!"

"Good Lord!" he said. "I can't!"

He hadn't meant to speak so loud. But in a sudden hush, as Miss Adair was being pushed forward through the press of people, his voice carried, appallingly clear. He could see that she had heard him; he didn't need to look at Molly to know how furious she was. All he could see was the color that had rushed into Kathleen Adair's cheeks.

"It isn't fair for me to have won!" she said. "You see—I'm going home so soon—I won't have time for sittings——"

"But——" Steve began.

"Kathleen!" That was Molly, cut-

ting in. "Of course you'll stay over! Steve—I've been dreaming of a portrait of Kathleen by you—I—why—I think I prayed she'd win!"

People closed in about them. There was no chance for more talk. Kathleen Adair, drawing herself a little way apart, looked curiously at Steve. And in his eyes she must have seen a strange look, dogged, almost defiant. She was very thoughtful while she waited for Molly. And, after all, she waited in vain. For Steve came to her, instead.

"Molly's crazy," he said, almost curtly. "She insists on staying to clear up some things—though she's almost dead. I'm to take you home and then come back for her."

Miss Adair made no protest. Very quietly she got her wrap and set out with him, across the sands.

"I'm sorry you heard me say that," he said gravely.

"I'm sorry you let others hear you," she said. "That's what complicates things."

"I know." He nodded. "Because, of course, now we've both got to go through with it. And I can't do a decent portrait of you."

"You know—I'd like to know just why," she said. He puzzled her; that was plain enough.

"I'd better tell you, I suppose," he said. "It's—well, it's because I'm afraid I'd be too truthful. You see—I set out to try to make you forgive me for—well, the way I acted. And I don't think you've played the game fairly."

"Mr. Carroll!" she said, amazed. "I—"

"I mean it," he said, rather grimly. "You've never forgotten for one moment, have you? You've made up your mind never to let me forget, really. You—well, you're not stupid. You could see that I—well, that nothing had ever mattered as much to me as wiping out what I'd done, getting a fresh start

with you. And you'd let me get just so far and then—"

"It's you who are stupid!" she said angrily. "I—I—didn't want to forget—and forgiving would have meant that—"

"Exactly!" he said. "I've worked that out. That's just it. Oh, I don't care—any more! But—well, I was pretty badly fooled, you see. I thought you were big—and you weren't. And it's all the things I've been thinking about you that will try to get into a picture! That's what I'm afraid of. You see—I—well, I really can paint. And I'm afraid a portrait of you would get away from me—that I wouldn't be able to do a nice, pretty, surface picture—a sort of colored photograph. I'm afraid I'd put it all in. And—you haven't deserved that. Because, of course, you're only all that to me. You wouldn't be, necessarily, to some one else, who'd never started reaction like that in you."

"Oh!" she said, helpless in her fury. She stopped and faced him, in the waning moonlight. "You—you're contemptible! Do you think I'm afraid of what you'll paint into my portrait?"

He said nothing at all.

"I never meant to let you paint me!" she said. "But now—oh, you've got to! I'll hold you to your bargain!"

"As you please," he said, and bowed. They had come to the Randalls' cottage, and he held open the unlatched door for her to enter. "I suppose there really is not much time. I shall be glad to start to-morrow, if I am to paint you at all."

She bowed, and flashed past him. And he walked back, very slowly, very gravely, and yet with a curious little smile lightening the corners of his mouth, for Molly.

And the next day she came to him, serene, unruffled, smiling, coolly friendly—the Kathleen Adair he had been seeing day after day, ever since

they had had it out on the occasion of their second meeting.

"I'm here," she said. "I'm not afraid, you see."

"I see," he said. "You understand—I was really trying to be fair with you, last night? I knew I'd make you angry, but it seemed to me there was nothing else for me to do."

"I'll take my chances," she said, rather scornfully.

"Then—the cards are on the table," he said cheerfully. "I wish you'd think about pleasant things, if you can. And I'm going to ask you to wait until the picture's done before you look at it."

She nodded.

And as he went to work, she seemed to grow, despite herself, into an interest in him. She had seen him at work before, when he had been sketching, but this was different. He disposed of her with a ruthless disregard for her own ideas—even for her comfort. He tried half a dozen outline heads, in crayon, before he got a pose he liked. But after that he wasted no time at all, and it must have seemed to her that he might almost as well have been painting from a lay figure.

He swore roundly as he scraped out a line that had gone wrong; he smoked steadily; as the light changed, he worked at the makeshift arrangements of his windows. His whole studio was a makeshift affair—an old cabin, the windows of which were principally his own work. He was a pretty good painter, but as a carpenter, he could have been useful only as a horrible example.

And still, for all her fury, for all the unpromising start they had made, the sittings brought about a certain friendliness between them. She was seeing him, for the first time, you see, at his very best. He wasn't self-conscious when he worked, and with her, inevitably, he had always been self-conscious. There were times, even, when

he wasn't specifically conscious of her—when good, straight talk poured out of him and stirred her to reluctant response in kind.

It wasn't long before a frank curiosity possessed her, and she begged for a glimpse of the picture.

"You've frightened me, a little," she said. "It—well, it's rather appalling — Do you know—you've made me a little ashamed of myself? You've made me think that perhaps you saw that I was doing something when I scarcely knew it, myself."

He got up with an abruptness that startled her.

"You promised!" he said gruffly. "Not a look until it's done! Next week, some time—"

"Oh, well," she said, stung, a little hurt. After all, she had given him an opening.

And then, one morning, he was late. He reached the studio and found her waiting. She dropped into the pose. And then, suddenly, she got up.

"I won't cheat!" she said. "Not every way. I looked."

"Well," he said, rather heavily.

"Mr. Carroll—I *am* ashamed, now! You haven't fulfilled your—threat. You've been kind—and more than kind—to me. I know enough about your work to see that—"

He took a quick step toward her, and then he stopped.

"Kathleen!" he said. "I—I've painted what I've seen, in these last days. I talked like an unlicked cub that night—"

She faced him, unafraid. Her eyes were shining.

"Damn!" he said. "I can't do it!"

He stared at her wretchedly. And the most curious look, of blended wonder and dismay, came into her eyes.

"Say what you were going to say," she said. Her voice broke, wavered, grew faint. "I—I—want you to say it."

"You said you couldn't cheat!" he broke out. "Neither can I! Kathleen—can't you see? How I tricked you? Do you know that you were meant to win that portrait, from the very first—that it was so I could paint you that I suggested it? That I fixed things so that it was bound to be one of your numbers that was drawn? Molly didn't know—but that was so. I put the slips in that bowl, and burned them right away. And then—when I talked to you that night—I wanted to taunt you, to dare you so that you would let me paint you!"

"You—you've seen what I've painted! I couldn't talk to you in words—you wouldn't let me. But I knew I could make the canvas speak for me! I made you think—what you thought that night. I made you look for a clever, brutal portrait—spiteful, vicious. And all the time I knew that I could never paint you except as a man paints the woman he loves! Oh, I meant to cheat and lie and steal to get you! I counted on everything that's come about here since I've been

painting you. I counted on your surprise when you saw what I'd painted—because I knew you'd understand! And I thought I could cheat to get you! Well—I can't!"

He stopped, his breath coming fast.

"Now you've got it!" he said. "I'm rather worse than you thought I was, I suppose."

And suddenly her clear laugh filled the cabin.

"Oh, my dear!" she cried. "As if that mattered!"

He stared at her, incredulous. He saw the tears that stood in her eyes, the trembling of her laughing lips. Awkwardly, unbelieving still, he went toward her, groping.

"Steve!" she said. "Oh, Steve! You frightened me so just now! You thought I could see more than I did in your painting! I could see what I knew before—that you had painted a woman who loved the man she was looking at! And I was so—afraid—so ashamed—so sure that I had gone too far, when I meant only to punish you a little—Steve—I thought I'd lost you."



THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN

THE king is dead, but something of the sting
Is quick removed by cries of "Live the king!"
Finality—like that which doth attend
An hour's last stroke—comes when we lose a friend.

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON.



With Eyes for No Woman

By Robert Rudd Whiting

Author of "The Golden Idiot,"
"Idle Tale," etc.

HE turned to beauty as a flower turns to the sun. When the Great War broke, he vaguely felt that all ugliness had combined to blot out all that was beautiful. He went forth to the great adventure light-heartedly, and paid, for him, the supreme sacrifice. He came back blind.

The little mouselike woman who nursed him had a soft voice and caressing hands; and he was a born lover. They were married. There was no great surprise in this to those who had known him. "Just wait," they told each other wisely. But at the end of two full years, even the most knowing of them had to admit that the impossible had actually happened—the will-o'-the-wisp had become a hearth fire.

Back in the gay little colony on the Sound where he had flitted through so many golden days before the utter darkness, people marveled at the couple's wonderful devotion. Not so much at her devotion to him—there were women who could readily understand that, in spite of themselves—but at his devotion to her. Now that he had eyes for no woman, he seemed to have heart and soul for but one.

"Look," said one woman of his past to another, as, unseen, they watched them in their accustomed chairs in a recess of the inn porch.

It was twilight. A rapt expression of tenderness lighted his sightless face. His wife sat beside him in sympathetic

silence. Gently his hand reached out for hers. He raised her fingers to his lips.

"One might think," said the other woman with a trace of bitterness, "that she was all the world to him."

His mind, shut out from the present by darkness, was racing back over the years, feasting upon crumbs of color and sunshine from the past. He was back at an old New England school—barely eighteen. He could see the old shanty back of the cottage in which he lived. The girl of the shanty, tall, lithe, gypsylike, was going out to the well with an empty pail. Her dress was ragged and her raven black hair was coarse and untidy. Yet there was something regal in the animallike grace with which she moved.

"Hello, Gypsy," called the boy from his window.

She shot one scornful glance at him and went on about her business. The boy was disappointed; sometimes she told him to go to hell.

The blind man's mind flashed over weeks of boyish joys and tragedies to a sweltering June night just before the close of school. The boy tossed upon his bed, unable to sleep. Then, with the birth of an idea, he lay still and listened. No sound. The instructor on the floor below was abed and asleep. The boy slipped from his bed, drew on shirt, trousers, and sneakers, paused at

the window a moment, and then swung himself out and dropped noiselessly to the ground. 'Cross lots to the back road, down the back road to the path through the woods that led to Rabbit Pond, and then a long, cool swim—all alone—with no one to suggest *this* when it would be pleasanter to do *that*.

As he stood on the edge of a rock, arms upraised ready to dive, he thought he heard a faint rippling sound, far out in the center of the pond. He lowered his arms and peered through the darkness. Was that something—that inky blur? It seemed— He dove and struck out overhand—clop, clop, clop—then a long, silent glide through the water. Listen! It was something—some one. Clop, clop, clop, clop—another long guide. Why, it was Gypsy—the girl who lived in the shanty.

"Hello," he called softly, when he was almost upon her.

The sound of his voice broke whatever the spell that had held her. She turned and darted swiftly away from him. Surging with the primal instinct of pursuit, he lunged furiously after her. He was gaining steadily when she reached the shallow water. She turned and faced him, waist deep, her long black hair hanging in dripping strands over her glistening white shoulders. Her eyes were blazing, half in terror, half with fury. Something halted him. He hesitated, then turned and swam slowly away toward the rock where he had left his clothes.

She entered the woods path a little ahead of him. She must have known that he was just behind her, but she disdainfully ignored him. Her heavy hair reached almost to her waist. The faded dress clung to her still-moist body. He quickened his pace until he was beside her. A little doubtfully he took her firm, strong hand in his.

It was at this point that the women on the inn porch saw the blind man grope for his wife's hand and raise it

to his lips. She gave a responsive little pressure. Something in the caressing motion of her thumb took him back a half dozen years.

He was seeing a woman home from a dance. They were spinning along through Central Park in her limousine. The night was chilly, and they were holding hands in her muff, under the playful pretense of keeping warm. Just such a caressing little pressure of the thumb— He wondered. The feathers of her big black hat were on the side away from him. The faint, intoxicating scent of her pale-gold hair was maddening. He wondered. Wondering, he drew her slowly to him—and kissed her. Her eyes were closed. When a woman's eyes are closed, she can see no harm in what she does.

"Sweetheart," he murmured aloud.

"Dearest," responded the wife beside him on the inn porch.

An elusive something in the way she said the word brought to his sightless vision one of those tall, flaming-haired goddesses of southern California, daughters of those Spanish beauties whose pride melted like snow before the fiery passion of dashing Irish adventurers. But this picture was only for an instant. A whiff of salt air from off the Sound sent his fancy a-winging across the broad Atlantic. He was back at a little Swiss watering place.

The old German baron was giving a dance at his château. The floor was too crowded, the champagne was too sweet, but the waltzes were Strauss waltzes, and she—she was divine. He had not caught her name, he did not know her nationality; but they danced, and danced and danced, floating lightly on the surface of the soft, throbbing music. At last it stopped. He tenderly placed her cobwebby shawl about her shoulders and led her through the French window out upon the moonlit terrace. She did not speak his language; he spoke little of hers. But her

dark, pleading eyes asked a question, and the moon translates all languages into the one universal one. He arose from the balustrade upon which they had been sitting and took her hands. Gently he drew her to him. Silently she yielded and melted into his embrace.

The blind man had risen from his chair and was holding his hands out toward his wife. She, feeling that he wished to go in, took his hands. Gently he drew her to him.

"Dearest!" she protested. "Some one will see us!"

And then, because she thought that no one was looking, or perhaps because she knew that some one was, she met his kiss with hers.

"One might think," a woman of his past had said as she watched them, "that she was all the world to him."

She spoke nearly the truth. For this wife, whom he had never seen, was to him all the women he had ever seen.



BALLADE OF OLD SWEETHEARTS

I CANNOT bring my heart to say
That only one fair face is fair,
Or slight the loves of yesterday,
Because they are no longer there;
Deny Callista's raven hair,
Because pure gold your tresses flow.
I love you—yet can I forswear
The kind, good girls of long ago?

Jane, that so early went away,
Like music fading on the air,
Or Rose, so delicately gay,
Or Margaret, so debonair,
Or Olive, like some orchid rare,
With bosom white as drifted snow,
Or Mab, so brave to do and dare—
The kind, good girls of long ago.

Oh, merry as a roundelay
Those little festivals with Claire!
And Phyllis how can I gainsay?
Or quite forget—this many a year—
Audrey's light foot upon the stair?
Because you came, ah, must they go?
All that they gave and all they were—
The kind, good girls of long ago.

Envoi

O princess, bid me not declare,
Because, in sooth, I love you so,
That I for them no longer care—
The kind, good girls of long ago.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

THE delicious sense of unabashed dreariness that gently steals o'er one at a hitherto unsampled Ibsen play is to my mind a most valuable theatrical asset. I should think that every manager would welcome the announcement of the new Ibsen program as a sort of stimulus to the public appetite, which at certain seasons of the year becomes—shall I say intermittent? For months, the public is fed with every dainty that the manager can procure; epicurean titbits are served; the market is ransacked; and a period of utter dramatic gluttony is proclaimed. Then satiety, disillusion, and hypercriticism. You hear that the public is "pampered," that its cravings are impossible, and that its well-known fickleness is seriously in evidence. Drama, comedy, farce, musical comedy, operetta, and the vaporings of the "cult" theaters are powerless to induce the scintilla of a thrill, and there is nothing left but the exquisitely and reverently penitential Ibsen.

Oh, I do not refer to the Ibsen household words such as "A Doll's House" or the delicately mellifluous "Hedda Gabler"—those Ibsenic pillars! I allude to the "unpopular" Ibsen that has to be discussed, digested, and explained, not to say justified. And this season it was nothing less than the well-read, but little acted drama entitled "The

Wild Duck," sponsored by Madame Nazimova and Manager Arthur Hopkins.

We have already reached the stage when it is considered very bad form to say too much about Ibsen *as* Ibsen. The correct attitude to-day is to discuss, digest, explain, and justify in a rather superior manner, with none of the old prejudices. After all, Ibsen is Ibsen, and the "best minds" have given him position and respectability. You may wonder whether you really own a "best mind," but if you do not, it is a very easy thing to *seem* to do so. You go to "The Wild Duck," for instance, in a spirit of insistent endurance. You do not wear your usual theatrical expression—the sort you always take to the playhouse—but you are there, in a gently subdued and disagreeably tolerant frame of mind that has an appeal of its own. You know that for three hours you are going to revel in a succession of Ibsen "taints" and certain curious obsessions, and you are anxious to savor them in such a way that there may be no suggestion of surprise or disapproval. In fact, you become something of an actor yourself. They say that Ibsen plays have made many admirable actors, and I agree with the remark. I go even further and assert that Ibsen plays make actors in front of the footlights.

The thing to avoid is the semblance

of boredom. Years ago, we were all permitted to be visibly bored. In fact, it was looked upon as quite nice. The inference was that if you were bored, you possessed a reasoning disposition. But not to-day. At this particular period, you are not allowed to be bored even though your soul may rebel at the stringent regulation. You watch the performance serenely, and appear to accept it.

Even a sense of humor, in connection with Ibsen, is regarded as hopelessly out of date. Now in "The Wild Duck," for instance, you find that *Hjalmar Ekdal*, the putative father of *Hedwig*, is always asking for bread "with lots of butter on it, mind." In perfectly serious Ibsen moments, *Hjalmar* is obsessed with the idea of "bread with lots of butter on it, mind." At one time, he is relating the sorrow of his daughter, who, "careless and chirping like a little bird, flutters onward into a life of endless night." At that moment, *Hedwig* enters, carrying a tray with beer and glasses. She puts her arm around his neck and whispers in his ear.

"No, no bread and butter just now," says *Hjalmar*. "But perhaps you would like some, Gregers."

"No, no, thank you," replies *Gregers*, with a gesture of refusal.

"Well, you can bring in a little just the same," continues *Hjalmar* in melancholy tones. "If you have a crust, that is all I want. And plenty of butter on it, mind."

Years ago, you would have smiled at that—the insistence on butter would have struck you as silly and perhaps greedy. You might have thought of little Jack Horner who sat in a corner. But not now! You think of the "best minds," and you are sure that the butter is merely symbolic. It means something. So you carefully look around to make sure that nobody is moved to flippancy and uneducated mirth, and

then you resolve your features into a very owl-like solemnity.

I don't say that this is easy—nothing worth while is easy—but it can be done and it must be done. You think of butter as something significant and beautiful. Why did *Hjalmar*, in a moment of anguish, clamor for butter, when he really could have asked for stewed prunes or tomato catchup? Pondering over that question, you gradually lose all inclination to smile, and you feel that you have accomplished something. Better solemnity than frivolity. Any fool can laugh. Ibsen is an accepted certainty, and yours not to reason why. Think of your mind!

In the fifth act, the "taint" is out in full force. The horrid fact that *Hjalmar's* wife, *Gina*, was not everything she should have been has been discovered, and that old *Werle* had been the third side of the triangle is made perfectly evident. There is a strong scene between the husband and wife. Then this occurs:

"What are you looking for?" asks *Gina*.

"Butter," replies *Hjalmar*.

"I'll get some at once," she says, as she goes into the kitchen, and when she returns, she remarks, "Look here; this is fresh churned."

He seats himself on the sofa, spreads more butter on the already buttered bread, and eats in silence. It is really a butter revel. Of course the play happened before the war, and butter was cheaper then than now, but *Hjalmar* was a poor man, and all this butter extravagance rather repels one's sense of decency. To me, excessive butter eating is nauseating, and I felt so squeamish as I watched *Hjalmar Ekdal* that even my sense of humor died.

However, I am bound to say that very few comments were directed toward the butter, and it was never explained. Even William Archer, Ibsen's most sublime upholder and translator,

left the butter quite untouched. I know that I am betraying the very sort of mind that I am so anxious for you to avoid by even insisting upon these episodes. But I am endeavoring to point out the contrast between the Ibsen attitude years ago and that which prevails to-day.

Personally, I have not changed in the least. The "best minds" have not the slightest allurements for me, but of course I should prefer to know that you realize my complete unworthiness. I am bound to admit that, although I have made every effort, I simply cannot accept *Hjalmar's* penchant for butter as anything but greed, and greasy greed. All my friends with the best minds tell me that butter has a certain significance, and that *Hjalmar* knew what he was about when he devoured so much of it. You see, he was all wrought up by the hateful discovery that *Hedwig's* threatened blindness was an inheritance from old *Werle*, who was once friendly with his wife, *Gina*. He was, therefore, not himself. And the inference is that when a man is not himself, he eats butter. Perhaps. I suppose that it is better than moping and eating nothing at all. It is better; also butter.

As for *Hedwig's* inheritance, it was not nearly as bad as some of the evils that go down to posterity via the Ibsen plays. The Ibsen folks always leave their horrid accessories to children—never a jewel or a trinket or even a worn-out suit of clothes. The last will and testament invariably offers a taint of no value whatever except as a taint. I felt quite pleased that poor little *Hedwig* did die at the close of the play. All she would ever have inherited from *Hjalmar* would have been the butter taint!

"The Wild Duck" gives you a delicious sense of unabashed dreariness unequalled by any of the Ibsen plays. It is very, very long, and an enormous

expanse of the text concerns itself with the wild duck that old *Ekdal* keeps in the house as a sort of pet. They are always talking of the wild duck and its habits—which, I am bound to say, are much nicer than theirs! This wild duck was hit under the wing and dived to the bottom.

"They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get," says old *Ekdal*, "and bite themselves fast in the tangle and seaweed and all the devil's own mess that grows down there. And they never come up again."

In other years, the wild duck would have bothered you. You would have worried yourself to discover what it meant, and why it was there. To-day, you are delighted to accept it all unquestioningly, and, after all, that is simple, isn't it? It shows a lack of education to ask impertinent questions. If for a moment you should wax hilarious on the subject, you are set down as a "lowbrow," and that is despicable! You may say, in your artless manner, that it is gaunt hypocrisy to pretend to appreciate what others pretend to appreciate, just because they pretend to appreciate it. But it is much easier and much better form to be a hypocrite than to stand all by your lonely, looking lost! Hypocrisy has a bad name, but it is useful and it is *most* fashionable. You know that if you are a hypocrite, you are in the very finest society; whereas, if you are one of those atrocities who say what they think, you are regarded with suspicion.

In the matter of the Ibsen plays, it is the thing to be a hypocrite, and I can see not the slightest harm in it. Why bother? It may be difficult to sit through a play like "The Wild Duck," looking as if you enjoyed it, but it is a fine lesson in acting. Then the delightful thing about "The Wild Duck" is that it has never been "popular." That is tremendously in its favor. If unpopular, it *must* be wondrous. It

has become almost the fashion to decry "A Doll's House" and "Hedda Gabler" because they have been popular. They have enjoyed "runs," and that is hideous. "The Wild Duck" was published in 1884, and never even reached the Independent Theater Society of London until 1894! What do you think of that? Imagine ten years for an Ibsen play to reach the English language! Such suggested unpopularity is exasperating.

Madame Nazimova played the rôle of the fourteen-year-old *Hedwig*, and as it is by no means a "star" part, Nazimova must be credited with good intentions. She made *Hedwig* eerie and spritely, and she appeared with her hair "bobbed." The bobbed hair gave her a very singular appearance, and I do not think that it added to the solemnity of the occasion, though for goodness sake, don't quote *me*! I should have thought that *Hjalmar* and *Gina* would have objected to the headgear—perhaps, after all, *Hjalmar* ate butter in order to forget it—but I may be wrong. At any rate, the bobbed hair is not Ibsen, and one can say what one pleases about it, without fear of being accused of lack of mind. If the instructions in the Ibsen book had insisted upon *Hedwig* bobbing her hair, then—then—it would have signified some intense idea, but I can find no record of any such insistence. I suppose that Nazimova thought she looked well bobbed, and that there was no other reason for the curious coiffure.

This actress is still what we love to call cryptic, but when she first appeared in this country, there was less reason for her crypticism than there seems to be to-day. She was cryptic because she was artistically aloof. Now she has emphasized the cryptic features that we used to admire, and it strikes one as something of a pose. I am a fervent admirer of Madame Nazimova's talent, and always have been, but the simplic-

ity of former days has gone, and above all, Nazimova is a star, and is expected to achieve stellar results. I am glad that she has returned to the Ibsen fold—not because I am inordinately fond of Ibsen, but because I have never seen Nazimova shine in other plays. In "The Master Builder" and in "Hedda Gabler," she was perfect.

"Mrs. Warren's Profession" was actually revived by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theater, and such was the success of the Shaw play that the original engagement was extended. Really, this was one of the many curiosities of curious little old New York. Years ago, the attention of the police was called to "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and there were many edifying discussions on the jejune topic of morality. It was a great occasion, and the community arose in its right and might and protested. How well I recall that opening night, when the mob fought for admission, and there was a well-defined idea that "Mrs. Warren" was joyously ribald! And to-day! Not a ripple. The Washington Square Players placidly announced their revival of the play as if it were "The Little Teacher" or "Seventeen," and nothing happened. The Bernard Shaw tract was received with polite approval, and the very things that had appalled us a decade or so ago were unnoticed.

As in the case of the Ibsen plays, our attitude had changed. That is all. What is immoral to-day is not immoral to-morrow, and there you are! Let the most "advanced" philosopher simply wait. His time will come. The words that astound a community one decade will be solemnly innocuous the next. It is well to remember this.

Are we hypocrites? I refuse to make a definite announcement. I repeat, however, that though hypocrisy has a bad name, it is useful and most fashionable. I still think—you see I

decline to change—that “Mrs. Warren’s Profession” makes excellent reading in the library, but is scarcely for the stage. Its philosophy is deep, but its drama is not jubilant. I was amused as I watched the audiences at the Comedy Theater. They were quite appreciative, if a trifle silent, and they stayed till the bitter end. They were perfectly unruffled, and they looked like very “nice” people. The ribald mob that fought for admittance to the initial performance years ago was conspicuously absent. There were none of those dreadful blue-chinned youths you see at musical-comedy performances. The audience was composed of perfectly well-bred people, *not* anxious for thrill or anything of that sort.

Having paid my respects to “The Wild Duck” and to “Mrs. Warren’s

Profession,” I really haven’t the heart to allude except in passing to a production calling itself “Toot-Toot!” or to another rejoicing in the title of “The Squab Farm.” I should have liked to discuss them, by themselves, but, you see, I have been dealing with the “best minds,” and how can they possibly interest themselves in “Toot-toot!”?

The Greenwich Village Players produced “Pan and the Young Shepherd” by Maurice Hewlett, but except for the admirable work of Miss Fania Marinoff as the dumb girl *Agla*, I could find little to praise in the performance. It had good intentions, and that is about all. Ibsen really unfits one for anything else, and I cannot get out of my Ibsen mood. So I must let the other things go for the present—even “A Pair of Petticoats” and “Oh, Look!”



I LOVE THE TIME WHEN YOU MUST BE AWAY

I LOVE the time when you must be away,
When I may cherish all my thoughts of you,
And, in the joy-stilled hours of night or day,
Make precious memories live and dreams be true.
Then do I make my thoughts to faltering lines
Which from my love’s profundity have birth,
As spring’s first gold-and-purple crocus shines
From out the ancient and abundant earth.
But when you come again, the time is new.
There are a thousand little things to tell.
We laugh at tiny joys as children do.
We are together and we find it well.
So flowers, in purple joy and golden mirth,
Forget the splendid soil that gave them birth.

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE has made a name for himself from one end of the country to the other as a writer of detective-mystery stories. "Loot" and "Plunder" were both high up on the best-seller lists. We wished, while we were reading them, that we could find some one who could do us a typical AINSLEE mystery novelette—love, charm, sparkling comedy—as well as Mr. Roche does his particular type of mystery tale. And now we have found such a writer. It is Arthur Somers Roche himself. "Kissed" is the title of the tale, and it will be published complete in AINSLEE's for July.

Who kissed a certain young lady? She doesn't know, and you won't know, until the end of the story. It was not a commonplace kiss. It was a kiss that could be positively identified by the recipient. Circumstances seem to narrow the quest for the perpetrator down to six more or less eligible young men. The reader will have a much better time than did the heroine in her search for the right one.

THE same number will contain the first large installment of an absorbing new four-part novel by May Edgington, whose serial, "Magic Life," was concluded in a recent issue. "Angels," Miss Edgington's latest, deals with the fortunes of an unworldly young girl who enters the employ of an influential London business man. Two lovers, one flesh and blood and commonplace, the other anonymous, even unseen, form a strange rivalry. It is as interesting and entertaining as

those other AINSLEE successes of Miss Edgington's, "He That Is Without Sin," "The Woman Who Broke the Rule," "The Man Who Broke the Rule," et cetera.

The short fiction for July will include "A Desperate Girl," by Fannie Heaslip Lea; "Gladys," an amusing tale by William Johnston, the man who wrote "Limpy;" "The Cake Shop," a beautiful little story of rare appeal by Jeannette Derby; "A Ballad of East and West," another of Bonnie Ginger's characteristically human tales; and two unusual little bits by Lucy Stone Terrill and Countess Barcynska.

WE knew that the delicate appeal of Marie Conway Oemler's story in the April AINSLEE's would not pass unnoticed. A sailor in the United States navy writes us:

"I have just finished Marie Conway Oemler's 'To Be a Woman.' It is divine. It is just such a tale as I imagine an author is fortunate enough to write only once in a lifetime. There are parts of it to make one sorry he is a man; he so much desires to be a woman just long enough to cry. It inspires the same exaltation that one feels upon hearing the 'Marseillaise,' or in viewing our men swinging down Fifth Avenue on their way to God knows what. It bears a message which I certainly hope will not be unheeded by the mothers and wives of America. There is a duty even higher than motherhood and marriage vows—the duty of all mothers and wives to sacrifice their men to their country with a smile."

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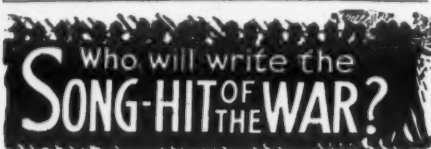


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Statement of the Ownership, Management etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1918:

State of New York, County of New York. (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of AINSLEE'S, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the day shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Law and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publishers, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; editor, Robert L. Whiting, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; managing editor, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; business managers, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Ainslee Magazine Company, Seventh Avenue and Fifth Street, New York, N. Y., a corporation, composed of Ormondo G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: Clarence C. Vernam, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation by whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. Smith, Treasurer,

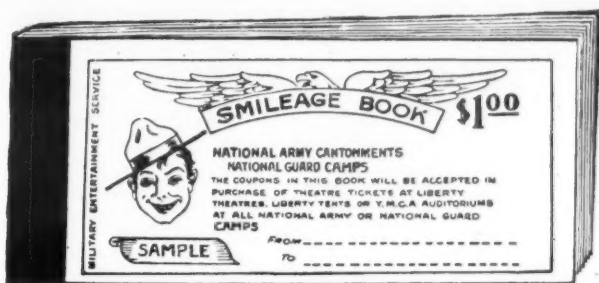
of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of March, 1918. Charles W. Ostertag, Notary Public, No. 51, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1919.)



Soldiers Soothe Skin Troubles with Cuticura

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HERE'S a royal gift for soldiers in training camps. A "Smileage Book" of tickets to "Liberty Theater" entertainments.

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1. Smileage Books are books containing coupons entitling a soldier to admission to any entertainment held in Liberty Theaters, Liberty Tents, etc., National Army Cantonments and National Guard Camps in U. S. A.
2. Smileage Books are issued by Military Entertainment Committee, under supervision of War Department.
3. Smileage Books containing 20 coupons cost \$1.00 each. Smileage Books containing 100 coupons cost \$5.00 each. The prices of entertainments range from five to twenty-five cents.
4. Smileage Books are for use in Liberty entertainments in National Army Cantonments and National Guard Camps only. They do not apply to naval training stations or other camps.
5. Smileage books are on sale by local Smileage Committees everywhere throughout the country.
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7. Sixteen theaters have been built. Chautauqua tents erected. A complete schedule of entertainments arranged.
8. Smileage Books are needed for our million of soldiers. Buy yours today—send it at once to your soldier.

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Nature Commands "No Corns" Fashion Dictates "Stylish Shoes"

Blue-jay Satisfies Both

To avoid corns, few would consent to wear sandals. That is an extreme.

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And there is no call for such privations.

For Blue-jay Plasters keep your feet in their natural state — free from throbbing corns.

Such discomfort is needless now—even foolish. No corn should be coddled.

Science Brings Relief

Blue-jay brings instant relief. The plaster includes a pad that relieves the pressure. Then the bit of B&B wax dislodges the corn gently, but surely.

In 48 hours the miserable pest may be removed easily.

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Blue-jay is the scientific way, to which Nature quickly responds.

Avoid Makeshifts

Paring is dangerous and temporary.

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It wraps the toe snugly. Stops the pain instantly. Ends the corn quickly, gently and completely.

B&B

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Instantly**

**Ends Corn
Completely**

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